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WAR SAGA

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TO MY HUSBAND

*"I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the base earth from the firmament."*

—William Shakespeare

KING RICHARD II, ACT II, SCENE 3.

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HOW WAR CAME

We turned our backs on our Allies when the First World War ended. We turned our backs on our promise to mankind of enduring peace. We told ourselves that the problems of Europe were none of our business—that never again would American blood stain foreign soil to settle Europe's insoluble problems. We had helped win the war. Now we were through. We had wanted no territorial booty. We got none. We wanted only to be free from all foreign entanglements—to get back to normalcy—back to making money.

Europe might need our aid, but we needed no one's. We had three thousand miles of ocean between us and her quarreling nations. We had five thousand miles between us and Japan. We got along fine with our neighbors north and south. We were rich. We were powerful. No one would harm us.

So we let both Europe and Asia alone with their endless worries. We left them some fine rules for settling their differences: the League with its goal of collective security (we didn't need it)—a family of nations pledged to work together for the general good and to join hands in suppressing aggression.

We left them alone with their age-old problems. There was the ceaseless fight for existence—the Slavs spreading westward; the Teutons spreading east, with only Poland and Czechoslovakia to stop them. There was Italy with her forty million citizens, cramped together on a rocky peninsula without coal or oil or iron. There was Japan with her seventy millions crowded onto a few tiny islands, without coal or iron or oil. There was Germany with her eighty millions of bitter, hungry people and a crushing indemnity to pay and no way to pay it except to export goods, and few raw materials for making the goods to export. Only the coal and iron of the Ruhr valley, where the vast steel mills and formidable Krupp Works could turn out farm machinery and ploughshares to be sold to the Balkan states in return for food and oil and lumber.

There was a humiliated, crushed Germany bearing alone the war-guilt stigma, smouldering with hate toward her conquerors who squeezed out her life's blood and kept her enslaved. An exhausted

and utterly disillusioned Germany, as the years went by, with no hope of respite. A Germany ready to rally to any leader who offered deliverance. Ready for Hitler.

* * *

A decade of peace slipped by. Disputes between nations had been settled peacefully. Grievances were legitimate. Hearts were enflamed with desire for peace, and memories of war were still vivid.

But soon it was obvious that moral muscles of nations, toughened by privation and suffering of war, were growing flabby. Soon it was clear that many disputes now submitted to the Council were based upon aggressive designs of strong nations upon the lawful property of the weak. Soon it was clear that peace, won by the sacrifices of the little people, was being bartered by hard-headed businessmen for their private profit. Soon it was clear that even the people were indifferent to the sudden flourish of blatant hypocrisy: governments condemning by word and condoning by deed. Soon it was clear that the principle of collective security—hope of the world—was being sold for a mess of pottage.

The collapse of world peace began with the invasion of Manchuria. Began with the explosion of a Japanese-owned railroad and the seizure of Mukden by the Japanese army under the pretext of restoring order. The affair culminated with the occupation of the Chinese province and the creation of the “autonomous” state Manchukuo.

Two days after the invasion, the League took action in a formal request that Japan withdraw her troops. Never was world disapproval of aggression more articulate than at this meeting denouncing Nippon's action. But Japan coolly rejected the League's demand, presenting her own terms for negotiation and threatening to withdraw her membership unless her terms were accepted.

An international committee was then appointed to investigate the affair. The report, a year later, revealed that Japan's invasion had not been in self-defense. Nor had the setting up of Manchukuo been the result of genuine, spontaneous desire of its people for independence. Another year of debate in Geneva brought the League's feeble action: non-recognition of Manchukuo. And the Japanese forces settled down in the new state to stay.

In the reaction of nations to this first real test of the League's power to keep the peace the pattern for conquest began to take shape. Japan was a long way off from European nations—all but

Russia. What possible conflict could result for them, even if Japan did take over China?

At the outbreak of trouble the United States Government sent notes to Japan and China, asking them to end hostilities and to submit the dispute to arbitration, adding that it would not recognize territorial gains achieved by armed force, and promising to enforce any measures adopted by the League. But the American public, loud in expressing its profound condemnation of Japan's action, was definitely opposed to intervention, so that more than two months after the invasion, the Government had not seconded the League's demand for the evacuation of Japanese troops.

The British Government acted with caution and reserve. It first dispatched a fact-finding commission to Manchukuo, and, more than a month after the invasion, sent notes to the contesting nations urging them to adhere to the League's procedure. Yet by the end of the third month the House of Commons had reached no clear-cut stand on the Government's action.

The action of France foreshadowed her doom. The Government sent formal notes supporting League action, while at home its utterances favored the Japanese viewpoint. The populace, on the other hand, burned with indignation. The "Mukden Incident," they said, was just an excuse to gain a foothold on the Asiatic mainland. They even intimated that the Japanese themselves had bombed the train. Soon we would see, they declared, that this invasion was a well-laid plan for military action.

Italy was silent.

All this from the strong. But there were others who, like the irate French public, saw the crack in the League's foundation which threatened the collapse of peace.

There was Russia, loud in assailing the League's inaction as an open invitation to Japanese aggression. A month and a half after the invasion the Executive Committee of the Socialist International denounced Japan's action and called for a protest from the world's workers.

Spain seconded the denunciation and sent a committee of her own to Manchuria to investigate the entire affair. Later her League representative made a quiet but prophetic statement:

"I see great danger in a nation claiming the right to stay in territory in which one is not entitled to be, on the plea of insecurity."

Republican Germany, more prophetic even than Spain, voiced unofficially in official circles her fear that this act would lead to war—a war that would spread to world conflagration.

* * *

Four years later, in October 1933, the crack in the League's foundation widened. Mussolini had invaded Ethiopia. World protest was loud and hot—louder far than it had been against Japan's act. Ethiopia was near the heart of Europe. It was near Britain's lifeline of empire. In the event of a conflict between Britain and Italy, all the nations would be affected. So the League's punitive machinery was swung into action and the "sanctions" program of the Covenant promptly invoked—Article XVI, which clearly pledges:

"Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenant, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations . . ."

But now, as in the case of Manchuria, the pattern for conquest was followed, disguised with ineffectual trimmings. There were countries who sincerely cooperated with the League. There were Finland and Sweden and the Netherlands—the latter rejecting a large order from the Italian Government for shoes. There were Russia and Turkey and Czechoslovakia.

There was always Czechoslovakia, the ardent champion of little nations. That was why the Ethiopian delegate appealed to President Beneš, after France and Britain had refused to help—refused, at first, even to let him submit the case to the League Council. Beneš had listened closely. Ethiopia's claims were undoubtedly just. But at last he replied:

"It would be unwise for Ethiopia to upset the present work of the Council. There are larger European considerations involved."

Strange language from the little nation who, in the not far future, was to be laid upon the sacrificial altar because of "larger European considerations involved."

There were nations who were only half-hearted in their censure:

x

the two most powerful members of the League, France and Britain. Together they devised the treacherous Hoare-Laval plan (Laval, the creator) to legalize Italy's claims and seizure by Ethiopia's surrender of large sections of her richest provinces and the creation of an Italian puppet state. A kind of Manchukuo. Sacrifice of Ethiopia would satisfy Mussolini's ambitions in Africa, they hoped, and keep him busy, leaving France and Britain a free hand in Europe.

The plan, when disclosed, was violently attacked by the public in both countries and consequently dropped. Yet even though these two nations led the fight for sanctions, they were wary about applying them themselves. France, in the interests of her own trade, avoided enforcing them. And Britain, fearing to be drawn into the conflict, exempted such items as coal, oil and other raw materials vital to Italy's military needs.

Belgium, too, was cautious in carrying out the "sanctions" pledge, fearing the effect upon her trade. And Yugoslavia. The United States banned shipment of arms to both belligerents. (Ethiopia had no arms industry. Italy had.) Austria and Hungary consistently declined to participate in sanctions against Italy.

Then there was the baffling reaction of the two other nations who were later to become Axis partners in conquest. Japan, having pioneered the way, now issued an official statement: "The Japanese Government indignantly condemns Italian aggression." And Germany, five months later to follow the pattern set by Italy and Japan, expressed deep sympathy for the people of Ethiopia and scornful repugnance for Italy's claim that she was "obliged to authorize the High Command in Ethiopia to take necessary measures for defense against aggression."

Worse than the coming destruction of town and land was the collapse of the codes of truth and honor which within four years were to lie in tragic ruins. The League had failed because its strongest members had failed. And the road to conquest was open.

* * *

Germany had not been blind—nor had the little nations been blind—to the signs that indicated that the two great Western democracies could not (or would not) protect the weaker members. Twice had the strength of the League been tested at a time when collective action could have kept order and peace. Twice the League had failed. Failed not because of its punitive machinery but because its members—especially its two most powerful members—gave lip

service to the ideal of collective security, while their actions were motivated by expediency and self-interest.

Now it was Germany's turn to set out on the high road. But she had first to break the iron ring which hemmed her in. She did so cautiously, testing each wall.

First, occupation of the Rhineland in March, 1936. Under the Locarno Treaty, Britain was obliged, in such case, to come to the aid of France and Belgium, the countries threatened. William Shirer tells us that the German troops had two sets of orders—one, to retreat if the French resisted. The French did protest, demanding that German troops be withdrawn. Russia placed herself "unequivocally" behind the French demand that her case be put before the Hague Court. But Britain declined to interfere, suggesting instead that a new treaty be negotiated, thus easing French fears while appeasing Germany. So Hitler's armies were allowed to remain in the Rhineland. One wall was down.

Diplomacy by *fait accompli* (take what you want and talk about it afterward) was by this time three acts old—Manchuria, Ethiopia, the Rhineland. Then came the Civil War in Spain, the significance of which the Western democracies failed to recognize at the time. For the struggle in Spain, as later events were to prove, was not against Communism. It was, instead, a battle to the death between democracy and Fascism—a dress rehearsal of World War II.

In the light of previous and subsequent invasions, the pattern was the same: political backing of so-called supporters of law and order, followed by military assistance. So in the case of the Spanish rebellion (July 1936) the imaginary excesses and dangers ascribed to the Republican government had been elaborated and dramatized by Fascist propaganda in order to present a *coup d'état* that would appear to the world as logical and inevitable. The home press of the aggressor nations had stirred up the public with stories of "Red atrocities," "disorders," "growing and unrestrainable indignation of the Spanish people at the incompetence of a government by Communists."

Fear of the masses was so potent a narcotic to the Tory ruling class of Great Britain that the waving of the Red flag was all that was needed to transform John Bull into Ferdinand the Bull, who sniffed at the flower of peace-in-our-time and gazed with trusting eyes at Germany and Italy, while these two moved unhindered to bring him to his knees.

The Non-Intervention policy—a farce from the outset—was concocted and perpetuated by Great Britain, though sponsored by

Léon Blum, Britain's Charlie McCarthy. Alvarez del Vayo, in his book *Freedom's Battle*, says that the British Ambassador to Paris, in the course of his visit there, is understood to have warned the French Minister of Foreign Affairs: should France find herself embroiled with Germany as a result of having sold war material to the Spanish Government, Britain would consider herself released from her obligations under the Locarno Pact and would not come to her aid. And in the preface to *The Spanish Plot* (by E. M. Dzelepy) Pertinax (André Geraud) confirms the warning with the statement that "At the beginning of August, Mr. Léon Blum was informed that the guarantee given by Great Britain to maintain the frontiers of France would not remain valid in the event of independent French action beyond the Pyrenees. This was the origin of the policy of Non-Intervention."

From here on France surrendered to Britain her independence in foreign policy, and, having taken the initiative in proposing the plan, was for the next three years denied any further initiative. To Spanish Loyalist arguments that the policy was suicidal, the French said only: "It is in London that you should exert yourselves." For two and a half years the Spanish Government protested and was told confidentially that London would make no move. And when London was approached, the blame was put upon France.

So the policy that denied to Spanish Loyalists the right to acquire arms for their defense permitted Germany and Italy to supply the Fascist Rebels with war material, manpower, and technical aid. To repeated pleas by Spanish delegates for a change of policy, in view of the fact that the agreement was being violated by these two signatories, the London Committee merely reiterated its demand for "irrefutable proof." Yet when such proof was given—i.e., the actual landing of Italians in Málaga and the Italian offensive at Guadalajara—the London Committee remained unmoved.

Within a week or ten days after the outbreak, the Manchester *Guardian* began reporting the presence of German and Italian agents actively engaged in Fascist military operations in Morocco and the Balearics. Correspondents for the New York *Times* reported the arrival of German planes in August, 1936, to assist Franco. In September it stated that German aviators no longer bothered to wear Spanish uniforms. A Hearst correspondent with Fascist General Mola at the beginning of the war reported that the great part of Fascist equipment was of German manufacture. Finally, as "irrefutable proof" (which the London Committee still ignored),

papers found by the French after the crash of Italian planes in Algeria showed that Italian military units were cooperating with Spanish Fascists under orders from the Italian Government.

For three months the nations which should have been Spain's friends scrupulously observed the letter of their pledges under the Non-Intervention plan, despite flagrant violation on the part of some other participants. Russia alone tried to give reality to the policy of collective security, and after three months of such open infractions of the agreement terminated her part in it in a note handed to the London Committee. In the note, Litvinov says:

"In adhering with other states to the agreement for non-intervention in Spanish affairs, the Government of the Soviet Union expected that the agreement would be fulfilled by its participants.

"The time that has elapsed, however, has shown that the supplying of arms to the rebels goes on unpunished.

"The efforts of the representative of the Soviet Government to put a stop to the practice of violating the agreement have not found support in the Committee. . . .

"Thus the agreement has turned out to be an empty, torn scrap of paper. It has ceased in practice to exist."

Henceforth, Russian war material was the only aid that the Spanish Loyalists could obtain, though weapons and troops from Germany and Italy poured into the country to aid the Fascist Rebels. Britain and France could not have failed to know what was going on. Soon even the aggressors were emboldened to admit their part in the struggle, while other officials at home, for the sake of the somnambulant London Committee, denied it.

On March 23, 1937, at a meeting of the Committee, Count Grandi openly acknowledged intervention by stating: "The Italian volunteers will not leave Spanish territory until General Franco has gained a complete final victory." Yet eight days later the Italian Minister of Press and Propaganda (March 31, 1937) renewed assurances that "the measures taken by the Non-Intervention Committee have been and always will be respected by the Italian Government."

On March 13, 1937, Goering rendered homage to "the heroes who have laid down their lives in Spain to ensure the victory of civiliza-

tion over the destructive forces of world revolution." And the *Kölnische Zeitung* (May 31, 1939) said: "In contrast to Italy, which during the war left nobody in doubt as to the part played by the legionaries, Germany awaited a Franco victory and the end of her self-imposed tasks before disclosing all that the German legion, which, under the name of the Condor Legion . . . had performed."

When a Franco victory was almost certain, the following note appeared in the official *Informazione Diplomatica*: "Italy replied to the first call of Franco on July 27, 1936; our first casualties date from this time." The whole Italian press echoed the *Popolo d'Italia*: "We have intervened from the first moment to the last." When the war was over, the *Forze Armate* (June 8, 1939) proclaimed that 100,000 fully equipped Italian soldiers had been dispatched to Spain for Rebel aid. And, if any doubt remained in the mind of the London Committee, there were the daily lists of Italian casualties in Italian papers.

Such is the pattern of undeclared war: official denial of intervention, but effective intervention just the same. In modern international politics what is promised means more than what is done. Countries may be invaded and land annexed, concludes del Vayo, but until the aggressor feels that the time is ripe to give official notice to his acts, "it would seem to the democratic governments and their diplomats to be a sign of bad form . . . to question the correctness and disinterestedness of such proceedings."

Such was the gentlemanly conduct of the League. There was still time for its members to salvage the tottering institution and the principle of collective security, had Britain wanted to. For almost daily trips of Germany's ambassadors in Paris and London to the Foreign Office to deny reports of intervention in Spain showed that she feared rousing the Western democracies to their danger—though, as time proved, there was absolutely no risk.

Yet in vain the Spanish Government tried to submit her case for League discussion. She had confronted the Assembly with the problem created by an act of aggression against a member state of the League, and in September, 1937, the Spanish request was sent to the Drafting Committee of the Sixth Committee. But when the resolution, which carefully excluded the fundamental problem of aggression, was read to the Committee, it was rejected by the Spanish delegation as a basis of discussion. The delegate then recounted the sufferings of the Spanish people, victims of an intolerable aggres-

sion—hundreds of Republican soldiers dying in trenches for lack of weapons; women and children being murdered by German and Italian airplanes.

The League, which had failed in the case of China and Ethiopia, failed now in the case of Spain. Says Alvarez del Vayo, Loyalist delegate to the League:

“The policy of yielding to the aggressors reached such scandalous extremes that the mere possibility of denouncing aggression made the sordid columns of the lordly Palace of Nations tremble to their foundations. Each further request for the ‘Spanish question’ to be included in the agenda was regarded almost as an impertinence.”

So Spain was not allowed to submit her case to the League for what it was—an act of aggression. As a result Germany and Italy were left free to carry on their dress rehearsal of the war which finally broke out against Poland, France and Great Britain.

In Spain the Berlin-Rome Axis was welded. Here, according to the aggressors’ own statements, planes and war material were tested and military and psychological strategy tried out and revised. Here 100,000 Italian soldiers and approximately the same number of German troops received battle experience. Here, whole villages such as Guernica were destroyed, and results checked by photography for scientific data. Here situations similar to those that might arise in a future Continental war were practiced. All this while Britain looked on and did nothing.

By September, 1938, Hitler had grown bolder. Supported by a formidable veteran army, well-tested war gear, and a workable system of intimidation, he set about razing another wall that hemmed in the Fatherland. In his demand for the immediate surrender of the Sudetenland, he was following the same pattern used in the Spanish Civil War: the stirring up of trouble to simulate anarchy; then giving military support to the so-called oppressed people.

Outwardly, the demand was the fulfillment of Hitler’s promise to “protect” all Germans living outside the Reich. To fortify his case he pointed out that even Woodrow Wilson had opposed the inclusion of the Sudeten in a non-Germanic state. The sinister motive behind this demand was to gain the military fortifications built in the Sudeten mountain barrier and to permit German forces to penetrate deep into Czechoslovakia.

The Czech Republic, justly alarmed, appealed to France and Britain, who intervened in an attempt to effect a compromise with Hitler. Twice Chamberlain took his umbrella to Germany; once to Berchtesgaden, and again to the Rhineland town of Godesberg. But the situation grew steadily worse. The Czechoslovakian Government, while consenting reluctantly to give up the Sudeten area, found insupportable Hitler's ultimatum that the land must be surrendered by October 1—only a few days off.

The Prime Minister pleaded for time: "The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic and flight on the part of those who will not accept the Nazi regime. They have to leave their homes without even the right to take their personal belongings, or even, in the case of peasants, their cows.

"We rely upon the two great Western democracies, whose wishes we have followed much against our own judgment, to stand by us in our hour of trial."

Hitler was adamant, and Czechoslovakia desperate. Within six hours her men between the ages of twenty and forty were on their way to report to their garrisons. The little Republic was mobilizing for war. The pattern for World War II was clear.

Prelude

(October, 1941, Geneva, Switzerland)

In the golden sunshine of Ariana Park the temple of world peace
stands—

Silent

Neglected

Deserted except for the technical staff

And a lone guard at the high wire fence

And the few gardeners who struggle in vain with rosebeds that run
riot

And with lengthening grass that Queen Anne's lace soon outdis-
tances.

On the once-smooth esplanade leading down to the lake

Rows of golden wheat lie cut.

Suddenly an eerie scream shatters the stillness.

Is it a banshee's warning that civilization is dying?

No.

Only the cry of a peacock roaming the grounds.

Most of the sprawling building is closed

And blackout curtains have blinded its eyes.

More of a shell it is today than it was ten years ago

When the beribboned sapling was placed on its highest point to
mark completion of the framework.

Yet here in the ruins of the code of truth and honor

The martyred dreamer comes again—

The staid professor who, they said, knew not the ways of a practical
world.

You can hear the tapping of his cane as he strolls

With halting step through echoing corridors

Into the silent conference rooms . . .

Into the huge Assembly Hall . . .

Over the deep pile of the blue Belgian carpet that smells of moth-
proofing.

In the vestibule outside the Council Chamber

He pauses to study the bas-relief—
The finger of God outstretched to touch the hand of man—
And the words below:
"Thou mastering, God,
Giver of breath and bread,
World's strand,
Sway of the sea,
Lord of the living and dead,
Over again I feel Thy finger and find Thee."

Into the Council Room the brooding figure wanders.
High up on scaffolding workmen are touching up frescoes on walls
and ceiling.
These are the gift of Spain, painted in warm tones of gold and gray
with dark brown accents.
The dreamer's eyes follow these triumphant stories of man's achieve-
ment in subduing his world;
The colossal figures of Justice, Strength, Peace, Law, Intelligence.
Overhead is the allegorical keystone,
These five cyclopean figures joining hands in the center—
The five parts of the world,
The five races.
United we stand.
On the back wall, facing the Council, is an invocation of peace,
A warning.
On one side the victims are bearing a giant coffin;
On the other, the vanquished, among their slain, are proclaiming
vengeance.

The dreamer turns away.
With drooping shoulders he wanders on to the Sixth Committee
Room
And stares at the panels behind the platform
Which all who attended the sessions could see and ponder—
An indictment of the living by those who had died in a war to end
war:
The soldier laid out in a winding sheet
And near him the mourners,
His mother, wife, children pleading to the heart of man for com-
passion.
In this room the Spanish delegate had pleaded for justice,

Recounting the sufferings of his Loyalist countrymen,
Republican soldiers dying in trenches for want of weapons,
And women and children murdered by aggressors' bombings.
Here the Committee had listened politely—
And then . . .
Had denied the Spaniard's plea.

The dreamer's eyes burn with a deathless faith as he murmurs:
"I would rather fail in a cause that I know someday will triumph,
Than win in a cause that I know someday will fail."
The world, too little tested in the fires of suffering to heed his
warning,
Today remembers.
The dreamer is gone
But the dream challenges.

1. The Storm Gathers

In many languages the mobilization decree came over the radio.
The city of Prague was in turmoil.
Everywhere placards told men between the ages of twenty and forty
to report to their garrisons within six hours.
Everywhere men were hurrying homeward to say goodbye to their
families.
They rushed from restaurants, leaving meals half eaten.
Orchestra players packed up their instruments and hurried home-
ward.
Cinemas closed.
Soon the streets were filled with confused humanity—
Men carrying suitcases or little bundles tucked under their arm run-
ning to the depot.
They brushed past dazed women on the curb weeping.
Buses and private cars were filled with soldiers.
Taxis were commandeered to help troop movements.
Street cars were rerouted.
Thousands of old men and women and children stood long hours
on sidewalks cheering departing soldiers—
Endless truckloads that rumbled through crooked thoroughfares.
Over the highways they rumbled, cheered at each village.
Railway stations were swarming with soldiers and civilians hurrying
to garrisons.

It was near the end of September.
By October the Germans would march over the border.
Refugees from the Sudetenland streamed into the capital.
Jews were dissolving their businesses and hurrying to get out of the
country.
Streets were crowded with panicky citizens
Rushing to stations for gas masks or coming home laden with them
for their families.

Radio bulletins warned people to darken their windows at night.
The night was falling.

* * *

The news of Czechoslovakia's mobilization spread like wildfire.
Hungary was uneasy.
Her frontier bristled with steel and concrete.
Roads were barricaded with barbed wire and guarded with machine
guns.
Yet Hungary was afraid to mobilize,
For the Little Entente would come to Czechoslovakia's aid if Hun-
gary attacked her.
Still there were rumors that Hungary was mobilizing.
The Government denied them,
Though military barracks were full of newcomers with orders to re-
port to their garrisons.
And railroad stations were crowded with more hurrying there.

* * *

In Paris, too, young men hurried into uniform.
In the Gare de l'Est, reservists on their way to the Maginot line
Embraced wives or sweethearts in a hasty farewell.
Workmen during lunch hour read Hitler's speech in the morning
paper.
There was a mounting sense of distrust of policies and intentions of
the French Government,
A mounting distrust of government officials.
The people of France did not want war.

* * *

In Germany there was anxiety.
One saw it in the faces of the people; they did not want war.
One saw it in the worried look of the man on the train from Cologne.
He was in his early forties.
Old soldier was stamped on him
In the military bearing,
In the ugly scars on his face.
He was silent.
Thoughtful.
At each halt of the train he rushed out and returned with the latest
edition of the Berlin newspaper.
He glanced swiftly at the headlines

Then tossed the papers aside and looked out the window,
Staring into blackness.
He remembered the holocaust of that other war
And the stench of the battlefield.
He was young then and without responsibilities.
Now he is married.
Now there are children.

For millions of Germans memories of that other war were still
painful.
They had been hungry because of the British blockade.
Turnips,
Turnips,
Nothing but turnips to eat,
Except soggy, sour bread made of potato parings.
Their children's faces had been pinched and lined;
Their bodies ricketic from malnutrition.
Now the thud of thousands of feet on the great marketplace at
Nürnberg worried them—
Unending lines of German soldiers marching hour after hour past
the Fuehrer.
Now the rumble of troop trains across the Fatherland worried them.
The occupation of the Rhineland and Austria had come and gone
like flashes of lightning.
But this bloody quarrel over Sudeten
With the great Western powers gathering and clanking swords—
Ah, that was another thing.
Now they were wondering.

* * *

America watched the clouds roll up on the horizon.
War was on every tongue,
In the headlines,
On the radio.
People were tense with anxiety and their voices were low.
Pope Pius XII pleaded for a peaceful solution to Europe's problem.
The President sent notes to Hitler and Beneš, urging them to con-
tinue negotiations.
Mussolini, too, intervened to ask Hitler to hold another conference.
From early morning on through the night Americans stayed by
their radios.

Some arranged relays of their families to listen throughout the day
and the night.

WAR!

WAR!

All the voices were subdued.

All the faces were anxious.

* * *

In London the war was in everyone's thoughts.

Talk day and night was of little else.

The whole week had been one long nightmare—

Young men hurrying away to their guns on the coast;

Plans completed for sending the children to the country at the first
air raid.

The subways at Charing Cross were to be made into shelters.

Men—even elderly men—worked through the night digging trenches.

Sound trucks calling for anyone who could swing a pick or a shovel
brought men flocking to parks and commons.

Women from neighboring houses brought them bread and butter,
pots of hot tea.

In the ghostly glare of torchlight people dug up their gardens,

Tossing out chrysanthemums to make shelters for air raids.

In England's cities volunteers reported to public buildings for work
on fire brigades.

From door to door the policemen tramped, giving instructions for
darkening windows.

Frightened civilians rushed to buy blackout material.

Soon the stores were sold out.

In long lines in the morning fog they stood to be measured for gas
masks.

To the people of England, Chamberlain remarked:

"How terribly incredible that we should be digging trenches and
trying on gas masks

Because of a quarrel which is taking place in a faraway country."

And an Englishwoman wrote to her sister in far-off America:

"Tomorrow they are broadcasting a prayer meeting for everyone to
join in.

The churches too are open for prayer.

I have been all afternoon at the Town Hall putting gas masks to-
gether.

The Town Hall is full.

Hundreds are working there.
I am going back when I finish this letter.
It is very grim and we work almost in silence.
I have already got in bleaching powder for mustard gas raids,
And buckets of sand, rakes, and dust pans for fire bombs.
We are making preparations for a gasproof room.
Our dugout in the garden is getting on, too . . .”
She blinks back a tear.

* * *

At Munich there was to be a last meeting.
Hitler had agreed to another conference.
Russia had already announced her readiness to come to the aid of
the Czechs
If they resisted the Chancellor's demands.
Russia was willing to attend the conference,
But the two Western democracies did not relish the thought of Com-
munist Russia as a possibly ally.
So the meeting was set for the same four:
Hitler
Mussolini
Daladier
Chamberlain with his umbrella.

Here at the birthplace of the Nazi party
Czechoslovakia was laid upon the altar of expediency.
Chamberlain and Daladier brought home the good news:
“Peace—in our time”—
Then clamored for their governments to begin rearming.
The policy of appeasement had come to a grim end.
Honor was gone.
Promises were but breath—
Were but ink that would vanish when the crisis was over.

* * *

The citizens of Prague were sullen with grief;
Sullen with anger at the Munich Pact.
Why did their Government accept such a swindle?
The loss of the Sudeten,
Then Teschen-Silesia,
And now Hungary's demand for her minorities?
Thousands of angry Czechs milled through the streets shouting:

“We want to fight! Let us fight! Give us guns!”

Up and down the thoroughfares they paraded in small groups,
Or, gathered in knots, talked in low tones of their land's plight,
While uniformed police stood by, silent but vigilant,
Ready to quell any demonstrations.

The soldiers were angry—

The gallant Czech army that was now withdrawing
From fortifications built at so great a cost to their countrymen.

It was not easy to surrender them to the Germans.

Officers avoided the eyes of civilians

As with lips compressed they discharged their duty.

Czech troops scowled as they passed bystanders

And muttered oaths as they withdrew.

It was not easy for them to stand by idle

While the enemy troops marched over the border.

Grim and impotent they watched the enemy take down the Czech

“Drive Left” signs

And put up their own “Drive Right” directions;

Watched their countrymen load furniture and bedclothes into ox-
carts

Preparing for flight,

While German refugees returned rejoicing,

Their bands playing as they entered,

Armored cars

Caissons

Machine-gun units

Anti-tank guns

Rumbling in front of columns of German civilians

On foot

On bicycles

In oxcarts

In automobiles,

While peasants in wooden shoes cheered and tossed flowers to the
cocky, steel-helmeted German soldiers.

Nazi flags brought from their hiding places flapped in the brisk wind

Beneath a hastily-built arch of triumph.

But in Prague arrived the crowded trains

Filled with bewildered Czech refugees.

In Teschen, too, wild rejoicing broke out.

Up and down the streets Polish citizens marched and danced.
Polish flags hung from the houses,
Loud-speakers blared out the national anthem.
On the Polish side behind the border
Crowds of joyous Poles were massed.
They stood bareheaded while the anthem was playing,
Waving and shouting at their countrymen across the barrier.
At two o'clock they ripped off the red-and-white striped gate
And paraded with it through Czechoslovakia's thoroughfares.

In Warsaw on Pilsudski Square
Thousands of Poles listened to their Foreign Minister.
He told them that Poland had no desire to injure anyone:
That the present case was one of right and justice.

* * *

Bismarck had said it:
"The master of Bohemia is the master of Europe."
And Beneš had said it:
"The destiny of Europe will be decided here."
But no one would heed Beneš.
No one would see.
Now spring brought a swift succession of crises:
German occupation of Czechoslovakia—
All that was left after Hungary took Ruthenia—
The invasion of Memel!
Invasion of Albania!
Finally the invasion of Poland, too.

2. And These Are the Beginnings of Sorrow

For weeks the German press had lashed the public with tales of
“atrocities,” “provocations,” “waves of terror”
Committed by Poles against German minorities;
Told lurid tales of German refugees fleeing from Poland back to the
Fatherland.
The people in Germany read them and worried.
They were silent and serious.
They did not want war.

In Poland, pilgrims made the trip to the monastery of the Mountain of Light
To pray to the Black Madonna with the sabre cut in her cheek.
Thousands of grim, black-clad peasants,
Hundreds of gaily-costumed villagers,
Colonels in uniform,
Counts in Bond Street tweeds—
All came to Poland’s holiest shrine to repeat in monotone the prayer:
“Theotokos, Mother of God,
Thanks to thee the wheat is in.
But let it not be wasted;
Let there be no war.”

In Warsaw the devout ones went to mass
And afterward dug miles of zigzag trenches in parks and playgrounds,
In lawns and vacant lots.
Men, women and children of all walks of life dug shelters from air
raids that each day brought closer.
Men went straight from shops and offices to dig trenches.
Musicians, actors’ associations were given schedules for digging.

The face of Europe’s cities was scarred with trenches.
Sandbags were piled around public buildings.
Shop fronts were boarded.

Works of art were stored in places of safety.
The stained-glass windows of Canterbury Cathedral were packed and removed to the crypt and protected with sandbags.
Millions of citizens went about their business with gas masks at their belts or hanging over their shoulders.
The war of threats and tales of atrocities was turning at last to a war of guns.

The lights of Europe's cities went out.
For street lights Paris allowed one small bulb covered with black cloth.
London was black at night—
All but the Thames River which gleamed in the dark like a silver ribbon.
Street lights were covered with black shades.
Headlights were dimmed
And red lanterns stood on traffic pylons.
Trees and curbs were ringed with white paint to guide motorists and pedestrians through the dark.
Windows in homes and places of business were closely curtained.
Busmen groused when passengers profited by the dark to pay their fare in counterfeit coin.

* * *

It was the end of August.
In Warsaw the tension was mounting daily.
Foreign attachés were ready to depart on a moment's notice.
The wife of an American wrote home to her sister:
"What an upside-down, crazy world we are living in!
It's like a wild, distorted nightmare.
I can't believe it is real—
Except that I don't sleep at night very well,
Worrying about the future. . . .
We are living out of suitcases.
Funny life!
Yet I still feel that nothing is going to happen—
That at the eleventh hour all will be peacefully settled."
Five days later she wrote to her parents:
"Such terrible news has come this morning.
I can't believe that war has really started.
When I write the word I feel that it surely can't be true—

That tomorrow I shall wake and find that all this is a hideous nightmare. . . .”

On the night of September fifth the Polish Government withdrew from Warsaw.

The city would surrender without a struggle.

But the workers’ organizations were bent on fighting.

Battalions were recruited—

Men, women and children all doing their part.

They built barricades in the city’s outskirts and dug anti-tank trenches.

German tanks rumbling into the suburbs were beaten back with terrific losses.

Women hurled bottles of gasoline at them and set them on fire.

The digging of trenches, the mining of thoroughfares went on during a thundering bombardment of bombs and artillery.

At regular intervals over the Warsaw radio came martial music—

The voice of hope telling all Europe that the city held out.

But the Poles lacked planes and anti-aircraft guns,

And the supply of ammunition and food was diminishing.

They clung to the one hope—everyone thinking:

“Soon the rains will come to sodden the plains and bog down the foe’s tanks.

Soon the snow will come in the mountain passes to give us time to mobilize,

To give Britain time to come to our aid.”

But time and the weather were the enemy’s allies.

September was dry.

For three weeks the Poles kept up their stubborn resistance

Until food and ammunition at last gave out.

All hope was gone.

Suddenly the martial music was silenced

With a deep-toned hymn and then, Berlin announcing:

“Warsaw has capitulated.”

A burst of “Deutschland über Alles” ended the story.

The battle of Warsaw was the pattern for total warfare.

Waves of bombers made formidable in two years’ practice in Spain’s civil war

Droned over the city with the relentless mission:
Destruction of Warsaw.
Poles by the hundreds, the thousands, were fleeing
On foot
And on bicycles
Or pushing wheelbarrows loaded with bedding and food and a few
prized possessions.
Tears streaked worn faces as they turned to the bombers that roared
above them,
Wreaking destruction on all that was theirs.
Morning found thoroughfares laid waste by the bombing
Carcasses of horses piled high against curbs
Hundreds of separate fires still blazing,
Choking the city with smoke and a mouldering dust pall . . .
Homeless thousands wandering aimlessly—
Vast, bandaged, silent crowds streaming through wrecked streets.

All that was left of Warsaw was a shell.
In the midst of the wreckage the victors took pictures.
A German airman with boyish face surveyed the havoc he had helped
create.
Another—an officer—wept as he watched the burial of a child near
the spot where it lay.
A German weeping!—what could it mean?
German troopers returning from Poland
Told of the “graveyard” atmosphere of Warsaw,
The mute submission of the peasants,
The inextinguishable hatred gleaming from eyes of executed leaders.
To the question, “Why do you inflict such torture on the Polish
people?”
German prisoners replied, “*Wir müssen.*”
“*We must.*”
They said they had been ordered out for maneuvers
And the next thing they knew they were in Poland.
They had not even known that France and Great Britain had en-
tered the war.

The story of Warsaw was the story of Poland
And of other lands to be occupied.
The people were starving.
Bread, dark and soggy, was their only diet.

Less than five slices a day to sustain them.
The children were crippled and ghostlike with rickets.
An air of sadness hung over the famous market,
Once a colorful bazaar with booths piled high with meats, cheese,
fruits and home-grown vegetables.
Most of the shops were now closed.
The few left open sold wooden shoes and second-hand clothing.
Gaunt men and women milled to and fro with tattered clothing
hung over their arms
To be traded for food, if they were lucky.
The city of Warsaw was dying.
Poland was dying.

* * *

Time and infidelity were the enemy's allies.
It was wise to keep faith with Poland until Czechoslovakia was out
of the way.
It was wise to be kind to Russia until Poland was gone.
A friend at one's back is a comfort in wartime.
There were the little border states
Norway and Sweden, Finland and Denmark, Holland and Belgium
and Luxembourg.
How they had clamored to proclaim their neutrality!
It was wise to allay their fears—
Wise to have friends at one's back in wartime.

It was wise to reassure Denmark that Germany would respect her
neutrality,
And twelve days later to seize the country;
Then, two days after, to move into Norway.
Good to find Quislings and patriots hard to distinguish from one's
own countrymen.
What a comfort to know one can count on disloyalty—
That nations keep pledges when they are expedient!
Words!
Words!
And scraps of paper!
Nations are people.

* * *

Holland and Belgium had been so fearless!
They had reason to be.

Holland with her dikes that could flood the country on a moment's notice;
Belgium with her little Maginot—
And, of course, her treaty.
Britain and France could look out for themselves—
Belgium would play safe.

Holland and Belgium had been so trusting.
Then suddenly nothing that happened made sense.
Thousands of white blossoms floating from clear skies—
Thousands of enemies clad in Dutch uniforms
Or the long, flowing gowns of theological students,
Seizing the airdromes,
Cutting communications,
Throwing the Netherlands into turmoil.
Then came the merciless bombing of Amsterdam . . . Rotterdam
. . . and the invasion of Belgium.
Fire and death rained upon unwarned citizens of crowded villages.
Only two days before, these countries had accepted in good faith
Germany's promise to observe their neutrality.
Now they sent frantic appeals to their Allies—to France and Great
Britain—
For the aid they had only recently declined.
Within two hours troops of their allies were moving rapidly into
the front lines
While transports were unloading more at their seaports.
Within eighteen days King Leopold was surrendering his army of
five hundred thousand,
Leaving the Allies' left flank unprotected;
Leaving the British—Dunkirk;
Leaving the French—capitulation.

3. When We Remember Zion

Along the world's dusty roads millions of homeless civilians wandered—

Walking . . .

Walking . . .

Not knowing where—

Their salvaged belongings slung over their shoulders

Or pulled in an oxcart

Or pushed in a wheelbarrow.

Like storm-driven leaves before autumn's west wind

The stricken multitudes were fleeing.

Highways were clogged with them—

Bombed

Strafed

Terrified humanity fleeing;

Fleeing in motor cars

Fleeing on bicycles

Or perched upon lorries full of household belongings;

Thousands just walking,

Toddlers thrown over their shoulders like meal sacks.

Bent, wrinkled natives plodding on aimlessly—

Tired, sweating refugees.

Lines of them,

Lines of them

On whom the dust settled like the dust that they were.

In the autumn of nineteen hundred and thirty-six

The processions of homeless Spaniards began

As village after village,

Suburb after suburb,

Were destroyed by bombing.

Tired, wrinkled peasants, forced from their bombed homes, had
fled in their burro-driven carts.

And when at last the struggle was over,

There was the flight into France to escape the rule of Fascist Franco.
Through the deep snow of a pass in the Pyrenees Mountains
Desperate Spanish Loyalists fled.
They fled by thousands, by tens of thousands,
Ragged
Starving
Frozen
Dragging themselves and their few worldly belongings
Over the mountains to the valley of France.
Women and children and men, young and old,
Barelegged
Barefooted
Some ill
Some crippled—
Making the hundred-mile trek in a snowstorm,
Herding before them a few sheep and goats,
Children carrying babies,
Tears streaking the faces of both.
Some too ill or too weary to trudge any farther
Lay down by the roadside to die in the snow.
The way was strewn with the frozen, the dead,
Hundreds dying within sight of the border.

* * *

The spring of nineteen hundred and forty
Was the loveliest Paris had ever known.
Chestnut trees blossomed in wild profusion
And the Seine smiled a Mona Lisa smile
As it glided beneath the shadowy arches.
But in the hearts of anxious civilians
Lurked a dread that they tried to suppress:
Would the Germans roll westward into Holland . . .
And on through Belgium . . .
And then through France?
Anxiously they talked of Norway,
Speculating,
Accusing.
They talked of their own corrupt camarilla:
The Chamberlain-Daladier-Bonnet regime.
They circulated stories about private benefits
Received by the "Munichois" for manipulations in the Munich Pact.

Restaurants and theaters in Paris were crowded
And jewelers were doing a thriving business.
Well-to-do Frenchmen, lacking faith in their government,
Its currency,
And even the army,
Were investing their money in precious jewels.
Life had become hard for the people of France.
They had not even faith in their leaders to sustain them.

In Waterloo, Belgium, there was great excitement—
Horses, mules, wagons drawn up in gardens
And crowds of civilians all talking at once.
There were all kinds of stories:
“The Germans are coming!”
“Liège has fallen!”
“French and British soldiers are running away!”
On beaches the wild waves were dashing in high
And far off at Dunkirk a strange lot of vessels were running aground.
There were rumors that the dikes at Nieuport would be closed
And the land would be flooded to hold back German tanks.

Like autumn leaves the people were fleeing.
The roads were jammed with automobiles—whole families inside
them,
And mattresses and household goods piled on the rooftops.
There were army trucks also
And long lines of soldiers weaving in and out,
Veiled in the dust clouds that hung over the roads.
The people were dirty and tired and frightened,
For over their heads the bombers were droning.
They would suddenly dive downward.
There was a long whistle.
One could see the bombs falling.
Then, crash!
The earth shook.
Dirt and flying objects fell on the refugees.
Then the planes were gone—
Only to return soon to repeat the bombing.
Everywhere dirt
Smoke
Terror.

For days now refugees had been pouring into Paris
From Holland
From Belgium
From bombed towns in Lorraine.
Trains packed with them puffed into railway stations.
Trains packed with them rushed out again.
Everything added to the growing alarm.
News of the breakthrough had spread like wildfire.
"The Germans have passed Sedan!"
"Now they're at Laon!"
"They're bypassing Laon!"
Only a highway—
A broad concrete highway—
Lay between Paris and the onrushing Germans.
General Gamelin said at last to his staff:
"*Je ne réponds plus de rien.*"
"I am no longer responsible."
In a whisper of panic the words were repeated throughout the
metropolis.
The Gare St. Lazare was in utter confusion
As frightened civilians hurried from town.
The number of packed motorcars was steadily increasing—
Clothes, bedding, furniture tied to the top, back, and sides.
With every hour the news grew more serious:
"The pocket—the bulge—has been opened wide!"
"It is opening wider!"
"It's extending now toward the English Channell!"
There were frantically improvised plans for defending the water-
ways:
The Somme today . . .
In a week, maybe the Loire.

To the doubtful haven of the south drifted millions of uprooted
families,
Fleeing to Paris, and from there fleeing southward.
The roads were a *melée* of moving humanity
Of horse-drawn and mule-drawn army equipment
Of lorries
And war machines
Animals
People;

All sorts of vehicles loaded to bursting with families and bedding
and furniture and bundles;
Old men and old women pushing perambulators
Or dragging huge boxes piled high with belongings—
Clothes, pans, and blankets and huge loaves of bread.

All was confusion—

Tanks

horses

ambulances

carts

taxis

bicycles

wheelbarrows

automobiles,

And thousands and thousands of retreating soldiers—

French

Belgian

Polish

Moroccan

Algerian

Weaving their way among frightened civilians—

The rich and the poor,

The weak and the strong.

Here a wounded man falls by the wayside

To die there.

Here lies another . . . another . . . another.

A frightened

Hideous

Imperilled procession.

All over the world terrified peoples were fleeing.

The roads of Burma were blocked with streams of them—

Sick, starving, frightened humanity fleeing into India.

An endless line of Malaya's civilians streamed across the Johore

Bahru causeway

Before it was breached by Allied engineers—

Tired, sweating lines of refugees on whom the dust kicked up by
returning soldiers

Settled like the dust that they themselves were.

Back and forth across ravaged China

Panic-stricken millions wandered.
For years they had trekked across plains and rivers
Up and down bare and desolate mountains
Through the snow or the hot sun, seeking asylum.
Thirty million weary, hungry civilians—
Two million children.
While Japanese bombers droned over their heads
And bodies would suddenly hurtle through the air—
A child . . . a mother . . . a father . . . a sister.
Some, driven stark mad during their flight,
Trekked back and forth from one town to another—
Twenty miles there and twenty miles back,
Not knowing where they went,
Not knowing why.

Everywhere bewildered humanity was fleeing to safety:
Finns from the Russian frontier;
Norwegians to Sweden;
Poles stampeding in every direction—
Into Lithuania,
Toward the Balkans;
Jews fleeing to Russia;
Aristocrats, landowners, small capitalists to Germany—
Hoping for clemency from the lesser of evils.

The roads were clogged with refugees—
With peasants leaving fields and villages in panic,
Carrying their children and their bedridden old folk,
Or driving their sheep and cattle before them,
Or hauling in wagons and oxcarts and wheelbarrows
The few household possessions they had managed to salvage.
Russian peasants fled before Germans
Advancing . . .
Retreating.
Rumanians of Bessarabia and Bukovina fled to the interior
As the Russians drew near the old Rumanian border.

Millions of homeless civilians were driven like cattle—
Men, women and children were herded into boxcars
And hungry and terrified were deported to Siberia,
Thousands of Frenchmen from Alsace and Lorraine

Shifted to "the other France"—the France not occupied.
Whole villages emptied on one hour's notice;
Thousands of Dutchmen sent to the Ukraine
To settle there as model farmers;
And Serbs, Croats, Slovenes deported to "Old Serbia" as slave labor.

When the bombing was ended—
When the enemy was finally driven away—
There were the homecomings.
From cellars, caves, shelters and labyrinths of dugouts
Dazed
Battered
Terror-stricken humanity crawled back to the sunlight,
Seeking their homesteads
And finding a heap of tumbled stone and twisted iron and smouldering
ashes that once was home.
A dazed old peasant woman leans on her cane before the lone brick
chimney amid a heap of rubble.
Another pokes among the ashes for she knows not what.
Whole families gather in the courtyard still hot from fire
To collect their few pathetic belongings:
Bedclothes
A picture of the Virgin
A basin of cabbages
A toy
A canary in a cage that a little boy rescues.

These were the homes where the plain people lived,
Where wedding feasts were held and the dead were mourned—
Houses once filled with familiar objects,
Houses of memories.
Thatched, whitewashed stone huts of Polish villages,
The wooden benches and tables of the "hot room"
Mellowed by smoke and dirt.
All were gone.
Only the ashes remained
And the memories.

The Russians emerged from holes and forests
Where they had sought refuge from death and bondage
When the enemy hordes swept down upon them.

They returned to the charred villages of the Ukraine
To stand grief-shocked before anti-tank ditches
Filled with bodies of men, women and children shot by the enemy
Or buried alive.
There were coalpits filled to the brim with the dead,
And quarries with row after row of harmless civilians shot from the
back.
Double rows of weeping, grief-torn women
Sought faces of loved ones they feared to find.
One screams upon recognizing a son or a husband.
Another collapses with grief in the arms of her friends.

4. Behold a Pale Horse

There was no grumbling in England when war came.
Indeed one was so glad just to be breathing
There was no time for grumbling.
One could never take anything for granted in these days—
Not the bed that one slept in
Not the roof overhead
Nor the floor that one walked on—
Not even the joy, gone unnoticed till now,
Of just quietly drawing in breath and letting it out again.

One could never forget the fires that were everywhere roaring,
Nor the glare like daylight:
Fires raging in homes and no water to put them out—
The water mains broken.
One could never forget the docks by the Thames River blazing—
Limehouse
Millwall
Totherhithe
And those down by Tower Bridge—
And the thousands of workers' homes destroyed or damaged,
The pitiful warrens of London's slum dwellers.

One could never forget the drone of the bombers,
The scream of the bombs and the hundreds of thousands of terrified
people
Holding their breath while the bombs fell around them,
And the houses shaking,
Walls crumbling,
And then the explosion.

One couldn't forget the long nights of search for the trapped and
the wounded,

Hearing their screams and hurrying to help them,
Digging into wreckage and debris for a child or an old woman.
One couldn't forget the sight of the gaping houses and the faces
of the rescued—

Dazed,
Crusted with dirt and smoke;
Or the sight of the stretchers lying ready;
Or the tragic tales:
“Are they still hunting for somebody?”
“Is there someone still in there?”
“No one they can get out alive.”
“Many people?”
A long pause.
“A couple of children.”

One could never forget the returning planes after the All Clear,
While people were beating out flames with their coats or with rugs
or throwing earth on them.
There was the loud cry: “Duck!”
Then a crunching noise . . .
A great wind of sound . . .
And the blinding glare.
All about lay the dead in strange, twisted heaps.
There were the homeless too—
The bombed-out who struggled past one,
Battered and dazed.
In one split second they had lost their homes;
Lost mothers, fathers, husbands, wives;
Lost their sons and daughters.

Morning revealed the casualties and the devastation:
Torn cables that carried the city's light and power,
Sheets of fire breaking from severed gas mains,
Wrecked trains and depots and shattered communications,
Streets filled with rubble—
Piles of rubble where homes and familiar buildings had stood.
For blocks one could pass frame houses, battered and windowless,
And walk down uninhabited streets.

But morning found England unsubdued.
The sun was still shining.

Everyone was dirty but kind and going about his business with grim,
taut face.
Not bombs, not loss of sleep
Or trains that did not run could stem them.
All rose earlier to pick their way through rubble-filled thoroughfares
And maybe work later because of the time lost.
Damaged homes did not stop them,
Nor bereavement always.
The present with its daily needs—
This much they clung to.

Everywhere in England the scenes were the same.
In Birmingham
Canterbury
Southampton
Coventry . . .
Eleven hours of death were concentrated on Coventry,
On its arms' plants and cottages clustered around the ancient
cathedral that crowns the hill,
Its spire towering over War's humming factories.
Bodies found in the ruins were so burned in the white heat
That even the metal discs for identification were melted.
Coventry was a shell.
And there was Dover that knew shellfire as well as bombing.
Yet its thousands of citizens looked without fear toward mist-
shrouded Calais
And clung to their battered homes and their windswept chalk cliffs.

No one went to bed as in the old days.
One went to the shelter in his home or garden
Or to the packed public shelters.
There were fancy shelters for the rich, of course,
Like the one at the Hotel Dorchester
With neat rows of cots placed two feet apart,
An eiderdown comfort folded on each,
And each with its owner's negligee or dressing gown
And mules or slippers.
For others—the plain people—there were the public shelters:
The dimly lit caves, storage depots, and underground catacombs
Such as Lambeth's Deep and the dockside underground warehouses,
All carpeted with breathing, snoring, coughing humanity.

The stench was unbearable,
The sight dreary, appalling.
There were the tubes, too,
Dimly lit and policed,
Where people slept on the platforms
Packed close together
While the trains rushed in with a gust of stale air.
Early in the afternoon the queues began to form in front of the
shelters
Like queues for the cinema—
People arriving with blankets, mattresses, and baskets of food and
a thermos bottle
To settle down for the night along platforms, corridors, or even the
stairwell.
They laughed and joked and the women knitted—
Everyone with his cushion or his blanket.

Everything was WAR . . .

WAR!

WAR!

And every day there was trouble and tragedy because of the war.
But no one had time for recriminations.
Like the men at the front, all did their job.
Sometimes a note of sadness crept into their letters—
Letters to America that was safe from air raids.
“Swiss Cottage got it last night . . .
You remember College Crescent and Gibson’s,
The fruit shop,
The antique shop next door
And the little drapery?
Well, they are no more.
A bomb went through the middle.
And a house on the corner of Eton and Crossfield—it got one too.
It was a large house with a big garden.
Now it’s just rubbish.”

* * *

There was no grumbling among Russian civilians.
Their life was a saga of courage and sacrifice.
Though the winters are bitter in Russia, there was no coal for them.
The output of mines must go to the war plants and hospitals.

Wood for the houses was chopped by the women
And brought to the town's streets
And dumped for the householders to lug it home by hand.
There were no new clothes to be had in the shops.
The shops were all bare.
But styles did not matter now.
Warmth was what counted.
The clothing industry worked for the Red Army only.
The fighting men must be warmly clad.

The Russians fought well because they knew what they fought for.
Every factory,
Every enterprise
Was part of their own lives,
Was part of their souls.
Every hope,
Every dream they had cherished
Was built into the factories.
Every brick that went into them,
Every lathe,
Every engine
Meant butter and cheese and eggs and white bread that the Russians
had done without to pay for machinery;
Meant leather and textiles that should have made footwear and
clothing for them and their children
But were shipped to their Allies to pay for their services.
The Russians would not soon forget these sacrifices.
They would fight to the death to protect what was theirs.

The invasion of Russia left a trail of destruction,
Her people exhausted—
Places like Kharkov

Ryazan
Kushk;

Places like Voronezh
Rostov
Kerch
Kiev.

Universities leveled,
Ancient cathedrals split into shells.

Power plants and water plants and giant dams demolished lest they
profit the enemy.
Years of sacrifice blown up in a moment!

There was Leningrad—
The city that held out for five hundred and fifteen days.
More than half of its three millions citizens died during the first
year—
Died of starvation
Or were killed in the relentless bombing and shelling.
Some died of hunger while going to work or while turning a lathe.
The famine in Leningrad was a fearful memory.
One does not discuss it.

There was Sevastopol—
Every foot of its soil stained with the blood of its stubborn defenders,
A ghastly panorama of blazing barracks and warehouses and harbor
buildings
Mirrored in the still black waters of the sea.
This was Sevastopol.
Tongues of fire licking the wood as the flames leaped skyward,
Lighting deserted streets and their dark, empty houses.
The unceasing roar beat on one's nerves,
The scream of shells overhead,
The crunching of roofs
And the rumble of walls lurching into the sea.
A stern and forbidding scene for Sevastopol citizens gathered at the
dock
Waiting for vessels to take them away.
They clung to the few possessions they carried with them,
Reminders of their once happy life by the sea.

But their thoughts were drowned in the tumult about them—
Gangplanks being thrown out
Hoarse voices in chaos shouting oaths and commands,
The wailing and screaming of hysterical women—
Screams too from the wounded marines,
The bandaged Red soldiers who lay on the barges drawn up to the
quay;
Hundreds of shoving, jostling people who ran about aimlessly,
Bewildered children shrieking for their parents.

Soldiers on their way to the front rushed down gangplanks and
pushed their way through the mad, swirling crowd.
Young women—mere girls, they seemed—climbed slippery gang-
ways,
Straining under their load of wounded soldiers.

The crew worked tirelessly.
For days they had not slept in their shuttle to and from the mainland
Bringing supplies and troops to the city and evacuating civilians.
Quietly, skillfully, they worked creaking derricks,
Unloading from the deep hold the mass of supplies.
Between the ship and the waiting refugees and the wounded
The pile grew quickly—
Stacks of flour and salt
Cases of canned meat
Boxes of shells and bombs
Flasks of oil and acids
Freshly painted machine guns and artillery
New airplane motors and spare parts for tank caterpillars.

There was the memorable epic of Stalingrad.
Stalingrad was a thin strip of little homes and factories that stretched
along forty miles of the Volga's west bank.
Men and women once went to work here with dinner pails and
laced sacks slung over their arms.
Of a summer afternoon gay crowds scrambled down the steep brown
bank for a swim
Or for an excursion along the green-yellow waters.
Stalingrad in the year nineteen hundred forty-two
Was a city of flames and smoking hillocks.
The Volga was no longer the Volga of picture postcards.
Its banks were pitted with shellholes and craters.
Bombs falling into it shot up swirling columns of water.
Ferryboats plied to and fro bringing supplies to the city
And removing the wounded and dead to the eastern side.
Against the dark waters the blood-stained bandages of the wounded
stood out clearly.
And along the beach lay charred corpses of women and children,
Burned when the steamer was bombed while taking them to safety.

There was no time to bury the dead,

No time even to grieve.
The din of battle went on incessantly—
The roar of airplanes
The crash of bombs
And the maddening thunder of artillery.
There were no ordinary citizens in Stalingrad.
All were defenders—
Grim, dust-caked workers defending their city.
Though the foe was already within the gates,
The stubborn defenders still held out.
They fought for every inch of their shell-torn homeland.
Workers and students and Volga boatmen rushed to the front for
a counterattack,
A fanatical army of desperate civilians holding the river line until
aid could be brought up.

On through October the lines still held.
Freezing blasts blew out of the east
Carrying the bite of approaching winter.
The Volga would soon grow sluggish with ice floes,
And the enemy was striking with all his might
To cut Russia in half before the snow fell.
Little was left of the city of steel.
Every street was a battlefield—
Mined
Barricaded
Tangled with barbed wire.
No one lived in the houses now.
Every house was a fortress.
Ground floors and stairwells were nests of machine guns.
Kitchen tables sheltered snipers.
Major battles were waged over a single building.
Gains were measured in yards and buildings.
In January, when the siege was lifted
Stalingrad was a gutted shell—
A city of roofless, windowless, shells of buildings.

* * *

There was no grumbling in Greece.
There was only starvation and death and suffering unutterable:
Gaunt mothers begging food for their scrawny babies,

Emaciated, hollow-eyed children with ropelike arms who resembled
dwarfs more than human beings.
From door to door they begged for scraps of food that one throws
away,
These waifs with sallow faces and wild, feverish eyes and stomachs
distended from hunger.
They fainted from hunger.
Men, women and children fell in the street to die of hunger.
Of the nation's seven million citizens one-fifth perished within two
years from hunger and pestilence.
Dead bodies lay in the gutters unidentified by relatives
To keep from turning in their bread tickets.
Carts passed daily through the streets with bodies piled on them as
in days of the plague.
Starvation was fast consuming the spirit of the Greek people.
Hate no longer burned in their eyes.
There was no room for hate where life was a long, vain search for
food.

* * *

Wherever the enemy sent his armies
There was a path of death and destruction.
Along the white shores of the Mediterranean lay the ruined cities
of North Africa—
Tobruk
 El Alamein
 and Sidi Baroni—
That little town in Tunisia where the war raged for nearly seven
months.
The ivory-white village of Sidi Bou Zid, too, was devastated—
Citadel once of ancient Carthage,
“White azalea” of the desert, where Hannibal fled.
Its dazzling white buildings were heaps of rubble in a green oasis.

Sfax, the little seaport with its harbor once full of picturesque ship-
ping;
Fishing and sponge boats drawn up by the stone quay—
Sfax, loveliest of towns, was destroyed.
Fragrant once with the scent of verbena and roses grown to make
perfume,
The air was now rank with the sour, earthy smell of crumbled walls
and the stench of the dead.

Weeks of bombing had wrecked the waterfront,
 Wrecked the little fishing boats with their brown nets that the fish-
 ermen once mended daily.
 The mosque with its tall minaret towering over the land
 Looked down with sorrowing upon the torn city—
 Upon the ancient Phoenician city of Taparuna.
 In the early hours of morning . . . and at noon when the sun was
 high . . .
 And again in the afternoon before the heavens were stained like a
 pomegranate,
 The muezzin walked about the tower high over the prostrate city
 Uttering the eerie cry:
"Allahu Akbar!"—"Allah is greatest!"
"La illa . . . il allah . . . Mohammed rasoul allah!"
 "Come to prayer!"—"Come to salvation!"
 And from their holes and refuges all the dirty, noisy Arabs ran in
 their long flowing burnous
 To kneel and pray to Allah the greatest.

There was Sousse too—
 Or what remained of it after months of shelling by Allied artillery.
 The gray-walled Kasbah with its crenelated walls running down
 from it
 Still crowned the hill,
 Grim
 Angular
 Picturesque.
 But where was the marble white city of Sousse
 With its flat roofs fringed with green of palm and pepper trees
 And the dazzling blue of the sea beyond?
 The harbor was littered with hulks of broken ships.
 For blocks and blocks few buildings stood.

Wherever one looked there was war's havoc—
 Kairouan

Mateur

Medjez el Bab

Pantelleria

Pampedusa

Salerno

Messina—

All the little towns along the warrior's path.

Then there was Naples—

The waterfront, once gay with Neapolitan singers of happier days,
Was a shambles,

The harbor littered with sunken ships.

Hundreds of Italian civilians were killed in the street fighting.

They had snatched up guns, knives, anything at hand to battle the
enemy.

Young guerrillas, bareheaded, collars open,

Fought desperately against the avenging Germans.

The Hospital Incurabili was filled with the dead and the wounded.

It smelt of ether and blood and the unwashed bodies of the living.

Blood lay on the floor, caked or in fresh pools.

There was no water to wash it away.

For months there had been no water.

There was no morphine, no serum, no gauze, no medicine, no food

For the more than two thousand patients in these halls of misery.

The hospital was a scene of suffering and grief and impotence.

Here lay a man with his legs blown off,

Here a six-year-old boy with his right arm gone,

And nearby lay his eight-year-old brother who had lost his left arm

And whose smashed leg, said the doctor, "would have to come off
as soon as he could operate."

The boys' father and the ten-year-old brother had been killed in the
street fight,

And their mother shot in the eye.

An old man lay on his mattress silent,

His life ebbing from a hole in the head.

Beside him his daughter wept softly as she mopped up the blood.

For all the hundreds of wretched ones near her,

She was alone with her dying father.

A wild-eyed girl caught the arm of a passing doctor

And pulled him over to look at her mother whose arm was blown off.

The pallor of death was already stealing over the woman's face.

The doctor could only explain that nothing could save her.

The girl uttered a cry like a wounded animal

And began rubbing her mother's hand, sobbing the while.

It was a low moan

Like the wind in the forest.

But others around her took up the moan like a strain of weird music,
And a great wave of grief surged through the building—
A vast, swelling chorus of suffering humanity.

There were the Italian villages, too—
The hamlets that lay on the road to Rome.
There were the litter-filled streets of San Vittore.
Most of the houses had been demolished.
The walls sagged open, spilling the broken contents of rooms into
the open.
Little was left from the hand-to-hand fighting from house to house—
Germans and Americans stalking each other from window to win-
dow,
From door to door.
Such a peaceful mountain village had been San Vittore.
Nothing was here that the world would covet.

There was the ancient Benedictine Monastery high on the crest of
Monte Cassino.
Its ruins were part of the pattern called War.
In the matter of shrines and historical monuments the General
ordered:
"Nothing can stand against the argument of military necessity."
Fourteen centuries or more ago
The young Saint Benedict fled from Rome
To seek in mountain solitude a haven from the vice and misery of
the world below.
On the ruins of the Roman temple of Apollo he founded the mon-
astery
And its Holy Rule: Work is Prayer.
Today the sanctuary lay in ruins.
For weeks Americans in the valley below
Had battered their way through savage crossfire
From German pillboxes in battle-scarred Cassino and those that
honeycombed Abbey Hill.
Destruction of the convent was now a "military necessity."
Leaflets raining on the abbey and the thousands of refugees warned
them:
"The time has come when we must train our guns on the monastery.
Leave the monastery.
Leave it at once."

But American forces waiting below
Could not know that the Germans had trained machine guns on the
main gate,
That the abbot, his priests, and hundreds of helpless men, women
and children
Were held there prisoners.
By morning the guns roared and barked in the once-quiet valley
And wave after wave of Flying Fortresses droned over the abbey,
Pounding the hilltop with their deadly bomb-loads.
There were sudden bursts of orange flame
Billowing shapes of rubble
And black plumes of smoke mounting high over the sanctuary.
When the smoke cleared in the bleak wind,
The abbey stood for a moment shivering,
Then slowly disintegrated,
Smoke puffs bursting as its walls crumbled.
The Benedictine monastery was a heap of rubble,
Made part, at last, of a pattern called War.

No more shall the abbot and his priests from high cell windows
Gaze upon the mountains and the valley in the sheen of the bright
sun
Or watch the mists lift and roll on and vanish in the parklike valley,
While the mellow bells ring out for matins in the half-awakened
towns;
Or watch them gather again in the evening
While bells for vespers chime over the darkening town below.
Here there was peace . . . and the silence of sleep.

* * *

There was no grumbling among German civilians.
There were ways to take care of those who grumbled.
Even when the great blitz birds came home to roost
They did not grumble.
With nameless fear they saw their once-safe towns demolished.
Cologne . . . Hamburg—
Its forty-seven thousand citizens killed in one air raid.
There was the breaching of the Mohne Dam too—
A triumph of bombing by British airplanes.
It had taken months of study and planning and experimentation
To bring down those great walls.

A glorious triumph for the Allied armies
This turning loose of hundreds of millions of tons of water
Into valleys where the homes of humble folk nestled—
Modest cottages with gardens and vineyards,
Fruit of the toil and the sacrifice of humble people
Washed away in a man-made flood.
Fifty-four villages were flooded,
Fifty thousand defenseless citizens made homeless—
Old men
Old women
Innocent children
Young women waiting for their men to return from far-off battle-
fronts,
Patient
Industrious
Credulous people
Whose only crime was that they were Germans.

There was Berlin also—
A flame-scarred battlefield was the famous capital,
Houses crumbling one after another
Fires leaping skyward in giant columns
Planes roaring overhead and then crashing earthward,
And bombs—always the bombs exploding everywhere.

Then the raid was over.
For a time it was over.
Dazed, panic-stricken citizens crawled from the shelters to search for
their families.
The hair of some had turned white from shock.
Some, made insane, wandered about dazed
Or ran away, not knowing where they ran or why.
Many took their own lives in the incessant chaos,
The roar of explosions
The crash of falling buildings
The screams of the wounded and dying that drove them crazy.
A British pilot back from the sortie described the target:
"It was like a terrific sunset."
Berliners said quietly: "It was a flaming inferno."

* * *

Looking back one can see that the pattern for all this suffering was drawn up in Spain.
It is the fifth of November of that first troubled year.
The Rebels were at the gates of Madrid.
Overnight the city had been barricaded
And Loyalist defenders were building new parapets.
Government airplanes flew over the city
Dropping leaflets to hearten the citizens:
"People of Madrid,
You have an air force to defend you.
But you too must carry out your duty.
Do not yield an inch of ground."
Throughout the long night the recruiting of soldiers went on feverishly.
The radio blared out instructions to chauffeurs and trade unionists to rally to headquarters.
There were fervid speeches studded with the challenge that rose to a war cry:
"No Pasarán!"—
"They shall not pass!"
Thousands of citizens listened at firesides.
They were silent but determined to defend their city.
Recruiting squads of women marched through the streets
Calling idlers out of cafés.
Loud-speakers blared out appeals at corners.
Banners strung across roads proclaimed, *"No Pasarán!"*

Gangs of workmen with picks and levers
Tore up cobblestones and piled them into walls across the streets.
Women and children formed a human chain to pass the blocks from hand to hand,
Or small boys hauled them in soapbox carts.
From dawn to dusk the people worked.
Orders were given to blow up the bridges as soon as the enemy tried to enter the city.
Abandoned to their fate the Loyalists fought on,
Alone against the armed might of the aggressors.
From each torn village a stream of recruits flowed to the front line.
It was a mobilization without instructions save those dictated by each man's conscience.

From every loyal corner of Spain rallied bands of combatants to
defend their country:

Miners

Peasants

Masons

Factory workers

Schoolmasters

Artists

Students

Lawyers—

People of all ages and classes and professions.

They were armed with whatever weapons they found—

Shotguns,

Pistols.

A few had rifles.

In the mountains shepherds used their slings,

Hurling sticks of dynamite instead of stones.

Lorries of militiamen on their way to the front line

Filed through towns amid wild cheering

And the resounding war cry, "*No Pasarán!*"

Peasants stopped work in the fields to cry out,

"*Vayan con Dios!*"—"God be with you!"

Children left their games of "beating the Rebels"

To give the troops the clenched-fist salute

And to gaze after them till they were lost in the distance.

The defense of Spain was a people's triumph.

Every village had its heroes,

Every town its epic.

There was the glorious defense of Irún,

Key to the northern part of Spain.

That was a trial the Loyalists would long remember,

Seeing for a mile or more over the border

Truckloads of ammunition meant for their Government

But detained at Hendaye by French authorities;

Held at the border though ordered before the outbreak,

While machine guns and munitions from Germany and Italy

Were being landed at Cadiz to aid the Rebels.

To the very last moment the Loyalists held out,

Hoping the trucks would be released—

Hoping in vain.

It was lack of ammunition that inspired the "*dinamiteros*."
With a stick of dynamite clamped between teeth and a box of
matches in their hands,
They rushed on the enemy, hurling the explosive with incredible
skill
And spreading panic among the Rebels.

In Bilbao, on the eve of July nineteenth
When word came that Rebel troops were advancing toward Ochan-
diano,
The town was suddenly evacuated.
Anything on four wheels—
Lorries

Taxis

Private cars—

Sallied forth to meet the enemy.
Men, armed and unarmed,
Women and children,
Youths and young girls,
Joined in the march,
Fired with a passionate longing for freedom.

For two and a half years Madrid had withstood attacks from bombs
and artillery.

Hardly a pane of glass was left unbroken
To keep out the keen air from the Guadarrama mountains
That cut like a knife through unheated houses.
There was no coal for fuel and little firewood.
Spaniards smashed furniture for kindling
Or cut down trees along the boulevards—
Along the beautiful Paseo del Prado.

Terrorism could not conquer the Spaniards,
Nor the shells that for months had rained on Madrid,
Beginning regularly at seven in the morning
So that Loyalists called them "the alarm clock."
Leaflets demanding surrender were dropped
And followed by incendiary bombs.
There were the deafening explosions,
Then a glow of incredible brightness
As flames roared and ate into roofs, walls and along streets.

Ghostly figures of firemen and militiamen were silhouetted against
the glare
As they fought fires with shovels, mats, sandbags,
Sometimes with only their bare hands,
Heaving and sweating in the blistering heat.
Women and children ran from the houses shrieking.
Up Calle Montera from La Puerta del Sol people were streaming,
Their arms filled with anything they could salvage—
Bedclothes
Books
A canary in a cage,
Or maybe a bucket of coal.
Long tongues of ruddy flame leaped skyward.
From the doorways where bewildered women were huddled
Came the sound of sobbing.
A mother pointed to a blazing apartment building and moaned low:
“There goes our home!”
Two terrified children clung to her dress, rubbing away tears with
their tiny fists.
In the morning, with the smoke still puffing from demolished
buildings,
Refugees in blankets sat weeping on the ruins of lost homes.
Others—the lucky ones—
Strolled past the heaps of rubbish of broken beams and old plaster.
Here a militiaman was weeping.
He had come home that day on a three days’ furlough to find his
home destroyed,
All his family perished in the ruins—
His wife
His children
His aged parents.

The Loyalists could not believe that the Rebels alone would wreak
such havoc on their countrymen,
On their own cities.
They blamed the foreigners for making Spain a proving ground
for their own war.
They remembered the horrors almost unspeakable—
Hundreds of women in Cordoba, Sevilla, Granada,
Shot after seeing their husbands killed;

Shot with their hungry, half-naked children clinging in terror to
their skirts.
They would never forget the callous destruction of towns like
Guernica—
The people scattering in panic,
The planes sweeping low to strafe fleeing old men and women and
children.
Guernica, the little Basque seaport that was in no way a military
objective,
Wiped out as a military experiment in bombing.

5. Do You Hear the Children Weeping?

It was a summer that Europe would long remember—
Those weeks of going about one's business with the feeling of im-
pending disaster—
Disaster that not even prayer could forestall.
It was the most brilliant season since the outbreak of the first world
conflict—
Night clubs were gay with fashion's elite.
Over a powder magazine they danced to the newest music—
In London, to the strains of "*Deep Purple*";
In Rome, to "*It was Folly*";
In Paris, to "*Boom When My Heart Goes Boom*";
In Berlin, to "*Bel Ami*."
The children of Paris in the green parks shuddered as always at
Punch and Judy
Or laughed and shouted away the war clouds.
Then suddenly armies were everywhere marching.
All over Europe the children were fleeing—
Millions fleeing from war that no longer was fought on battlefields
only,
But burst into backyards, and streets of villages
And homes where plain people ate and slept and children did their
lessons.
They fled by train, by bus, by cart, on foot,
With parents, with nurses, with teachers,
Leaving their homes behind;
Leaving their bomb-target cities behind
Like ghosts of once-happy days.

The cities of England were childless cities
For the children had been bundled off to the country
Into strange places
Among strange people,
Into a rural life they did not understand.

Within four days the Pied Piper in his gypsy coat of war's flaming
colors
Had led the children to a joyous land where everything about them
was strange and new.
Each had a label pinned to his lapel,
Giving his name, his address, and his school evacuation number.
On his schoolroom desk was his haversack, fully marked.
Then came inspection to see that gas masks and haversacks were
all in order.
Next came a cheering speech by the headmaster,
And then the march to the trains and the buses,
Twenty children and two teachers climbing into each bus;
Long lines of children with their teachers trooping to trains,
Two by two,
Hand in hand,
Scrambling for seats by the windows;
Exhausted, drowsy, weeping children with knapsacks and bundles
Herded into buses and railroad coaches.
England's future was trooping off to safety—
The children of the poor and the little Lord Fauntleroy.
There was Tommy whose mother kept a pub in the East End of
London
And Jimmy whose father was a dockworker
And Freddy, the son of the bobby who watched them file past.
"One of those kids is mine," he murmured,
"God knows when I'll see him again."
Mothers clustered outside the gates weeping,
Not knowing where their children were going.

All over England the children were leaving—
Only a child or two left here and there.
The parks were hushed.
No primly-starched nannies pushed prams over green lawns.
No merry shouts of children echoed in playgrounds,
No racket of children's games in the quiet streets,
No trooping home from school.
The children were gone.
The first weeks for the children flew by in wonder.
They grew into months of anguish for mothers,
Of homesickness for children—
Homesickness that weighed so heavy on their young hearts

That many drifted back to the cities to share with their families the
risks of warfare,
To share in the blitz that ripped open their dwellings;
To share in the grief and the responsibility.

* * *

Three years passed.
Now came the third wartime Christmas in England.
Even the little Princesses were having a meager Christmas.
One should not revel when one's countrymen were scattered on distant battlefields,
Or indulge in extravagance when so many homes had been shattered
And women and children and old men disabled or killed.

On Christmas day the Royal Family attended church services.
Then they sat down to a dinner of rationed items.
There was a twelve-pound turkey, as always,
And a Christmas pudding that the Queen herself made—
So they say.
Toasts were drunk in wine from the King's depleted cellar,
And in the afternoon, after the King's broadcast,
The party went to the Princesses' drawing room to receive their gifts.

The Christmas tree was a small one this year—
Not the tall, spangled wonder of other years.
But the Princesses themselves had trimmed it with leftover ornaments
And the gifts lay unwrapped beneath its low sweeping branches.
Even the Royal Family was thrifty in wartime,
Saving all paper for essential war needs.
The gifts too were useful ones—
For "Daddy," a warm scarf and khaki gloves which the Princesses
had knitted.

* * *

Then came the fourth wartime Christmas.
The children of Limehouse had a Christmas tree
And each had a gift:
A penny picture
A patched book
A string of cheap beads
A salvaged toy—

All kinds of gifts made from odds and ends for the little old men
and women of Limehouse.
The party was held down a murky alley in the shadow of an arms'
plant near a brewery,
Near dreary tenement houses,
Some bomb shattered,
Some pathetically repaired.
Out of these warrens they came—
The children of Limehouse.

The children of Limehouse were undersized.
They were the children of London's workers:
Dockside longshoremen
Munitions workers
Women plumbers
Women bus conductors—
Children grown old in crowded hovels along the waterfront of the
Thames River;
Children who knew only bleakness and ugliness year in and year out;
Children who knew before they were twelve the deep, sad impact of
total warfare,
Homes shattered by bombs,
Homes broken by casualties beyond the Channel.

But on this day the children of Limehouse were gay,
Hardship, privation, memories of bombs
Forgotten in the wonder of having fun,
Singing the songs that America sent over the magic of radio.
"Deep in the Heart of Texas" they sang,
With all the stamping and clapping of hands.
They sang, too, that favorite of khaki soldiers,
"I've Got Spurs that Jingle, Jangle, Jingle."
The children of Limehouse could still laugh and sing—
Old and serious beyond their years,
Children of bleakness, suffering and blitzkrieg;
Children who, seeing for the first time a crocus,
Murmured in wonder:
"Lovely world!"

* * *

The children of Europe and Asia had learned all there was to know
of suffering.

They had dragged their starved, weary bodies from village to village,
Sleeping on bare ground in fields and forests.
They had fled in dumb terror from the bodies of parents who lay
so quiet,
Not answering their frantic entreaties
Or heeding their tears.
They had seen their homes reduced to ashes,
Their fathers murdered,
Their mothers burned alive.
Ask a child from Leningrad, "Where is your mother?"
He would probably answer, "She died in the famine."
Ask a child of Greece, "Where is your mother?"
He would answer most likely, "She died in the famine."
Or, "She died in the plague."

What were the children's thoughts of the world they lived in?—
The children whose only crime was that they were the flesh and
blood of enemy nations—
What did they think when they saw pilots dive down and rake
with machine guns
Men working in the field,
Cows in the meadow,
Horses and wagons and people on roadways?
What was the little Italian boy thinking
As silent,
Bewildered,
He stood over the bloody, torn bodies of his parents,
Killed while he looked on?
And the little Polish girl watching the enemy airplanes rake with
machine guns
The field where women were digging potatoes—
What did she think as she ran toward the flattened bodies
And, dazed, stood there?
Then she knelt beside one, crying:
"Oh, my beautiful sister! What have they done to you?
Oh, please talk to me!
Please, oh, please!
What will become of me, sister, without you?"

The children had shared both the toil and the suffering—
The courageous children of war-ravaged countries.

They had helped spread sand on roofs to put out fire bombs.
They had helped build their city's fortifications
And repaired bombed houses.
Thousands of waifs who fled from Thrace and the north of Greece
Belonged to the underground organization for saving soldiers and
patriots slated for German vengeance.
These were the "Young Wolves"—
Fearless
Sardonic
Elusive ragamuffins
With thin, scowling faces and hair that hung to their shoulders,
crawling with lice.
They had seen their comrades shot down in cold blood.
They had seen children dying in the streets from hunger
And heard the rattle of death approaching.
They could look now on death with equanimity.
Hunger, hatred, revenge they knew—
Revenge that was loyalty.
Sometimes they fled to rocky defiles to hide out with Greek and
British soldiers who refused to surrender.
In the deep ravines of Yugoslavia—
In the dark forests—
Children of captive lands hid out with bands of guerrillas,
Their clothes in tatters from climbing among rocks,
Gathering wood or hunting for berries and mushrooms for the
camp's needs.
Compassion was a long-forgotten emotion.
Sabotage!
Murder!
Everyone engaged in destruction as heroism!

What had America done to her children?
America, where there was freedom from bombing—
Freedom, too, from the care of parents.
What of the countless young girls who stole off from home with
their little suitcases,
Heading for war plants,
Lured by high wages,
Lured by the thrill of making war goods,
Working with intricate tools and drilling?
What of the girls with the ripe red mouths and red fingernails

Who ran off to camp towns,
Lured by the uniforms and dancehalls and War's excitement?
What of the uprooted, war-tossed children of trailer camps,
Whose fathers and mothers worked in war plants?
And the "door-key" children with their house keys hung around
their necks
To let themselves in when their school was out?
What of the older sisters no more than twelve years old
Who did the marketing and the housework and minded their
younger brothers and sisters?
They were tired and peevish the next day in their classrooms,
Sometimes falling asleep at their desks.
What had America done to the children locked in jalopies parked
by the roadside
While their mothers were working in war plants?
Restless children cooped up like puppies
With only the automobile horn to amuse them.
And what of the others who went to the movies and waited till mid-
night for their parents to come for them?

How could the world be redeemed in the eyes of the children—
The countless war orphans,
The homeless, crippled, ghostlike children of the world
Who shared in the suffering without knowing why—
The terrible meek who will one day inherit the earth—our judges?

6. God Is Our Umbrella

This was a war to kill or be killed.
Killing had become a science—a trade.
Glider pilots called it “unarmed combatives,”
But Marines named it plainly: “dirty fighting.”
In the office of the physical training director
Hung a chart of the human anatomy.
Nothing odd about that, one would say at first glance;
But a closer view revealed lines drawn to vulnerable parts of the
body
Where a blow could maim, disable, kill,
Or be excruciatingly painful.
“The boys have to unlearn the rules of good sportsmanship.”
This the instructor explained quite simply.
“They’ve been taught not to hit below the belt,
But that’s out now.
We teach them, see, all the various ways
To kill a man with the bare hand only:
How to grab the windpipe,
How to gouge out eyes,
How to break the collarbone with the edge of the mere hand;
How to snap an arm or a leg
Or crack the foe’s back,
Or kick in his skull in one swift, smooth maneuver;
How a kick will rupture
Or a curved thumb, blind.”
Yes, war was training men to be murderers.

Bewilderment,
Terror,
Suffering,
Death—
These were but tools in the art of warfare.
Disorders that science has learned to cure

And diseases it seeks to relieve or remove,
War evokes and administers coolly.
Killing was no longer a shameful business.
Generals were realists.
One said bluntly:
“Don’t shoot the enemy and let him die quickly.
Give him a slow death and make him suffer.
Crush him beneath your tank and let the blood ooze out of him.
Rip out his guts with your bayonet
And gouge out his eyes.
Make him afraid to stand up and fight.”

Yet soon it was Christmas.
Halfway across the world the bells of Bethlehem rang out over the
olive groves of old Judea
Calling the faithful back two thousand years
To the grotto where the Prince of Peace was born.
On Manger Square before the weathered stone Church of the
Nativity
Thousands of pilgrims,
Hundreds in battle dress,
Gathered in the crisp winter air to sing carols.
In many a strange tongue the old tunes soared heavenward:
Voices of Free French, Greeks, Poles, British;
Voices of Yugoslavs, Americans, Czechs, Christian Arabs—
All caroling the message to a war-stricken world:
“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”
To the countless millions the words were ironic:
To the millions whose homes were but heaps of rubble,
To the millions of fathers and mothers and wives and sweethearts
Whose loved ones were even then cowering in foxholes,
Or weary and dirty were slogging through jungles,
Or in rain and snow of Italy’s mountains
Were locked in hand-to-hand combat
To take some village on the road to Rome,
Or grimly were setting out in landing boats
Toward some bitterly contested beachhead like Tarawa.

To the millions of grief-shocked peoples the words were ironic:
To the terrified ones who scurried to shelters at the wail of sirens,

To the millions with children slowly starving,
To the millions of children who recalled other Yuletides,
Or the children who knew not the magic of Christmas.
For this, the fifth Christmas of the Second World War,
Found the world plunged in darkness with carolers singing:
“Hark, the herald angels sing:
Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.”

Were they only a dream—those other Yuletides?
Or were these but nightmares—
These since the war?
That first numb Christmas—
The Germans silent behind the Siegfried Line,
The Frenchmen confident behind the Maginot.
The blackout then had been a lavender glow
And Christmas Eve had been much as before:
Peddlers hawking flowers and toys along the Boul’ des Capucines.
Almost the same—
Except for the caissons that rumbled by
And the shafts of searchlights prowling the skies, seeking out dusty
stained-glass windows
As they watched for the enemy’s dreaded bombers;
Except for the questions in everyone’s heart:
“Will the Germans be over Paris tonight?”
“Will dawn find the city on fire and the dead strewn under the
chestnut trees?”
At Midnight Mass all listened spellbound to the dreamlike mingling
of the real and the unreal—
The priest in subdued tones of worry saying,
“When you hear the alert you will go at once to the *abris* designated.
Be brave.
Be calm.
Walk—don’t run—to the nearest exit,”
And then quietly reading the text of his sermon:
“. . . and she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in
swaddling clothes
And laid him in a manger. . . .”

Tell the people of Norway that only the enemies are heathens,
That their own Quisling traitors were Christians.
Tell the people of Holland that all Dutch are Christians—

Those who delivered their land to the Germans.
Tell the whole world that the businessmen of rival powers are
Christians—
The armament makers who paint over flaws in the sides of vessels
that brave men will sail;
The industrialists who sell to their government defective wire that
will be sent to a hard-pressed ally;
The members of international cartels who sell vital patents to firms
of potential enemy nations
And agree to withhold those very patents from the land for which
their countrymen die;
Presiding officers of such cartels who testify blandly before arms'
commissions:
"I have no objections to selling arms to both sides.
I am not a purist in these things, see?"
Financiers of our highest social circles who answer coolly:
"Peace is not our job."

Yet throughout the world's night the carols still rang out:
"Silent night,
Holy night . . ."
The remembered strains were blasphemy to thousands of homeless
Berlin folk
Huddled in factories and offices to sleep,
Or flocking to shelters for a nightmare of bombing,
To millions of German sons, husbands, fathers,
Fighting on the icy steppes of Russia,
Or battling to the death with knives and bayonets to hold some
hamlet in Italy's mountains.

Yet halfway across the world pilgrims from many lands followed the
Via Dolorosa—
The way of suffering that Jesus trod,
Bearing his heavy cross to Golgotha.
Some took the old Roman road to Bethlehem—
The same that Mary and Joseph took on the eve of the Nativity to
pay their taxes.
There were no inns in Bethlehem.
"No room at the inn," even today.
The hotels in Jerusalem were crowded with servicemen who had
journeyed there from nearby bases.

Walking from Manger Square toward Star Street one passed a taxi stand.

"Two dollars to Jerusalem, Mister."

Many of the tourists would remember their pilgrimage

By the souvenirs of mother-of-pearl which they bought,

Or the sprigs of olive.

A sign in the Nativity Store down Manger Square announced them:

"Manufacture of Mother-of-Pearl—

Best Souvenir of Bethlehem!"

All over the world the mystery of human existence was challenging.

Over the battleground of a thousand years—

From minarets high over mosques

Over the red-tiled roofs of ivory-white villages,

Over the tumult of streets and battle

Came the bell-like tones of the muezzins calling the faithful to prayer:

"Allahu akbar!"—"Allah is greatest!"

Like eerie music the strange words quivered in the glistening air:

"La illa . . . il allah . . . Mohammed rasoul allah!"

Tossed from one white minaret to another,

Echoing in the distance . . .

Fainter . . .

Fainter.

"Come to prayer!"—"Come to salvation!"

From the Mosques of the Swords came the eerie phrases—

From the Holy City of Kairouan that would soon be invaded.

From the ivory city of Tunis they came,

Where priests walked about the towers uttering the long-drawn cry,

Towers that look upon the scarred site that once was Carthage,

That would look upon today's defeated warriors,

The thousands of crushed, war-weary prisoners,

The once proud legions of Germany's armies.

From the rude white minaret of Médenine they floated,

While General Montgomery and his conquering army

Champed outside the Mareth Line

Behind which Rommel and his army had taken their stand,

Playing for time to join von Arnim's forces.

From even this white minaret the eerie call echoed:

"Come to prayer!"—"Come to salvation!"

Everywhere on this battlefield of wars for a thousand centuries
Moslem
Christian
Wandering Jew
By turn had murdered and pillaged for liberation.
In the name of Allah, Christ, Jehovah they killed;
In the name of a creed that was no part of them,
For hate smouldered in their eyes
And terror gripped their hearts.

And then it was spring again.
Christ was risen!
We knew because the calendar told us that the day was Easter;
Because young girls blossomed forth in their new Easter bonnets;
Because the buses and trolleys were jammed at church time.
All over the world the churches were crowded—
Hundreds of thousands of followers of Christ commemorating the
Resurrection of the Prince of Peace,
Seeking Him everywhere but in their own hearts;
Seeking Him in the churches
In the unintelligible chanting of priests
In the flickering candles on white altars
In the Easter message of ministers who live in the right part of
town,
Who belong to the right group of citizens,
Who know how to play on their vocal chords as one plays on a violin,
Who speak gloriously of Christ and the Four Freedoms and the
duties of the people.

Then all prayed.
In one united voice they repeated the prayer they have known since
childhood—
The prayer that Christ taught:
“Our Father,
Who art in heaven . . .
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

All over the world,
Lovers of liberty were celebrating the Resurrection of the one
Redeemer—

The world's greatest Leader who championed the principles of
democracy,
Liberty
Fraternity
The dignity of man
And peace through justice and understanding.

In England the countryside was green again and church bells rang.
Silenced since the fall of France,
Except as a warning signal of invasion,
They pealed now the regeneration of man.
In Hyde Park hundreds greeted Easter with a sunrise service,
The sermon preached in the green of springtime from a woodland
pulpit.

Hearts were lighter now.
One saw it in men's faces:
In Africa the war was going well.
Two years ago, lacking a month or so,
Britain had reeled under the debacle of Dunkirk.
Now the tide had turned.
The Avenging Angel had shouted the order:
"Drive the enemy into the sea!"
Dunkirk, at last, was being avenged.
Now all bowed their heads and repeated the Lord's Prayer:
*"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against
us."*

Through the crooked streets of Jerusalem,
Along narrow alleys,
Up stairways worn by countless pilgrims—
The Via Dolorosa that Christ once trod—
Worshippers trudged to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
It was a motley crowd that attended the pontifical High Mass—
A kind of United Nations Assembly:
Americans
Britons
Poles
Greeks
Czechs
Yugoslavs—
Soldiers and sailors in all kinds of uniforms.

There was the District Commissioner and other civil dignitaries,
Their silk hats gleaming in the desert sunshine;
And there were native women with forehead bands of strung coins,
Leading children dressed in their Sunday best.
All listened and watched every move and made responses.
But what did they understand of the service?
What did they understand of their own responses that their lips
made?
What did they understand of the loneliness of Him who said:
"He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father."
Or, "Whatsoever ye do to the least of these my brethren ye have done
it unto me."
What did they understand of this?

In Moscow the midnight curfew was lifted—
The second time that year and likely to be the last.
Thousands of worshipers thronged to the churches,
Hundreds starting in the early evening,
Though the churches were already crowded when they arrived,
Though the service was not to begin until half past eleven,
Though many would stay on for the first Mass at seven the next
morning.

It was a warm spring night.
Through the open doors drifted strains of the "*Internationale*."
Always at this hour the music was played over the radio.
The churches were packed.
Crowds overflowed into the streets as the evening wore on.
At the Church of Saint Ilya Obydenny, near the Moscow River,
The overflow trailed down the steps to the street and across to the
other side.
The people stood where they could see the altar through the open
front door—
The altar with its huge candelabra;
Or crowded at the side door where they could see nothing that went
on inside,
But now and then could join in the responses.
Two schoolgirls were talking about their lessons.
A man and woman were discussing the price of potatoes.

Inside the church there was hardly room to breathe.

It was now past midnight,
But the service would not end until one o'clock.
Already there was a stir in the middle of the church,
Someone trying to leave.
Voices were heard as the movement reached the main door.
"Please!" implored someone.
"Go back!" said another.
Several women fainted in the crush.
A man was trying to direct the exit.
The noise swelled.
"Shameful!" cried a worshiper.
"They act like they're in the market!" muttered another.

Soon the noise subsided.
Soon the service ended.
Soon the great white moon lighted homeward the proud and the
humble,
The Muscovites who toiled and prayed for the salvation of Mother
Russia;
And America's emissaries and members of private missions.

On Easter morning throughout Moscow
Russians greeted each other:
"Pristos Voskres,"—"Christ is risen!"
And another would answer, *"Voistinia Voskres."*
"Indeed He is risen."
And life would go on as it went on before.
The women would toil at rebuilding their villages,
Or at making implements of death and destruction,
The soldiers would go on killing the enemy,
And the blood of Russians and the blood of Germans
Would be spilled on the steppes where wheat would ripen.

In the land of the free,
Americans were remembering Christ's resurrection.
Limned against the dawn a lone cross with a spray of cool lilies
Stood at the top of Iroquois Park hill in Kentucky.
In the pale light of daybreak hundreds of worshipers trudged up
the road for the sunrise service.
To listening hearts a Voice was whispering:
"But I say unto you, love your enemies."

Do good to them that hate you . . .
And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them
likewise."
But no one heard the message of the Christ whom all were wor-
shipping.
They were listening to the minister who preached on "Sunrise with
Christ."
He compared the men on the battlefield "laying down their lives
so that the sun might shine on God's world"
With Christ "who gave His life that the sunshine of God's love
might shine on the world."

From over the hills beyond the great cross with the spray of cool
lilies,
From Fort Knox where men were drilled all day in the art of warfare,
Came a different message,
An echo from the General's address to the class of new second
lieutenants
Graduated the week before from the Officers' Candidate School:
"We have got to get into the killing spirit.
We must learn to hate
And to be more vicious in our attitude toward our enemies."

Ah, but that concerns War;
This is Religion.
Soon all bowed their heads and repeated the Lord's Prayer:
"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against
us."
Then they all trudged home
Down the long hill,
Talking of world happenings and events at home.
All the churches held Easter service.
They were packed with men, women, children dressed in their
Easter finery.
These too went home,
Or to an out-of-town restaurant for a big Easter dinner.
They talked about the miners and about cracking down on labor.
They talked of the men in the armed forces—
Talked glibly of foxholes, slit trenches, and the misery of life on
the battlefield.
They had only contempt for the miners in their plea for higher

wages,
"While fifty bucks monthly is all that the serviceman gets—and
maybe death."
They talked of the stock market,
Of yesterday's "bright report."
They discussed how stocks had climbed steadily upward—some, two
dollars a share:
How steels and oils and rails stood out,
But how the highest prices came in rubber;
How these were responding to forecasts of big future earnings and
the possibility of increased dividends.
They talked of the Ruml plan and hoped that the bill would be
shoved through.
And they talked of the high wages labor was making
And of how the Government should step in and start taking its share.
A raw, windy Easter—
But a beautiful service!

At Fort Knox, standing under a giant cross,
Four army buglers sounded church call.
Soon the amphitheater began to fill.
Soldiers from guard duty came in with their guns.
Row after row of drab khaki uniforms,
Brightened here and there with bits of gay color—
The Easter hat of some wife, sister, or mother.
Against the rumble of tanks and the droning of airplanes
They sang of peace and the glory of Christ,
While through the new leaves the wind was whispering the words
of the Christ whom all were worshiping:
"This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved
you."
But the General was speaking,
And the message of the Nazarene was lost in the realistic picture
that the warlord painted.

But the minds of the listeners were divided.
They were thinking of Tunis and Rommel and wondering how
long it would be before he was beaten.
The morning newspaper reported that a prominent General had
been wounded,

Reminding us of the General's exhortation to the men only the
past November:

"We must lust for battle.

Our object in life must be to kill.

We must scheme and plan night and day to kill

The sooner we get into the killing mood, the better."

Now all bowed their heads and repeated aloud with new vigor the
Lord's Prayer.

The words came without thought.

They were like old house slippers to slide into and forget the world
and its wearisome problems.

Everywhere on the homefront there was strife and dissension.

But today was Easter.

Today all paused to pay tribute to the Prince of Peace—

And to pray for victory.

Tomorrow they would get on with the war.

Men would descend into the bowels of the earth

To dig the coal

To make the steel

To produce the guns

And shells

And bombs

That would wipe the enemy off the earth.

And welders and riveters and drill press operators

Would toil for the high wages the government must pay to get the
work done—

Money the toilers would spend for their own doom:

Three thousand dollars in crumpled bills for a mink coat;

A handful of bills tossed up for a diamond bracelet.

Labor would forget that higher wages meant higher living costs,

And all would forget the millions of voiceless Americans—

The teachers

Salesmen

Clerks

Librarians

Stenographers

Waitresses

Who had had no raise brought on by the war boom.

And a congressman would remind us that the law draws "a cruel
and unfair distinction

Between the men on the homefront and those on the battlefield";
That "men who are sent to the battlefield are required by law to
be prepared to *die* for freedom,"
But that "men of the same age deferred on the homefront are not
required by law to *work* for freedom."

Today was Easter—
The anniversary of our Lord's resurrection.
But we were too worried—too eager to win the war—to hearken to
His admonition:
"Why beholdest thou the mote in the eye of thy brother
But perceivest not the beam that is in thine own?"
Two hundred billion dollars the world was paying to destroy the
old order,
While within men's hearts still thrived the seeds of the old world,
While men still lived by the old standards:
Toil and service and sacrifice by the many
In order that some few might enjoy the life abundant.

But today was Easter.
Today we bowed our heads and repeated the prayer all knew from
childhood:
"Our Father, who art in heaven . . .
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

7. Elegy

Along the white shore of the blue Mediterranean lay thousands of
graves marked with crude wooden crosses:
Graves of Americans, Germans, Italians, New Zealanders;
Graves of French, British, Australians and Indians.
Young, strong, valiant—the flower of the world's manhood dead.
The deep snows of Russia's steppes had melted, uncovering the dead:
Dead Russians, dead Germans, dead Jews, dead Rumanians.
The South Sea islands and the floor of the ocean were strewn with
the dead:
Dead Japanese, dead Americans, dead Filipinos, dead backward
peoples.

Where pestilence and hunger stalked to reap what bombs and shells
had missed,
Here too lay the dead:
Dead Greeks, dead Serbs, dead Poles, dead Italians;
Dead Chinese, dead Spaniards, dead creatures of India.
Digging graves and making crosses—
This was the motif in the symphony in blood.
All along the path of glory,
From the hot sands of Africa to the snow-capped Apennines
The graves were left:
A mound of earth by the side of the road
With the wooden cross that was now so familiar;
Or on a quiet slope near Kasserine Pass,
A cemetery of forty graves, the names on the crosses:
German, American, British, Italian, French, and "Musselman In-
connu";
Or on the plains of Russia the German graveyards
With crosses of white birch, helmets atop them;
Or now and then on some dreary island, a lonely grave with a
bayonet stuck in the ground to mark it,
A helmet and identification tag topping it.

This was the price paid for each river crossed,
Every ridge, every town, every hamlet taken.

There was no time for burial in the rage of battle.
The dead lay where they fell.
A soldier might pause as he plodded forward
To cover with shirt or raincoat the face of a comrade.
But the enemy dead lay about uncovered,
Fingers still clutching their shattered rifles,
Faces in agony frozen.

The desert was silent again
With the scars and the debris of yesterday's battle.
From the charred skeleton of a German lorry a wisp of blue smoke
wavered.
Then spiraled upward like a soul released.

Here too lay the dead:
A German youth in field-gray uniform.
Hardly more than eighteen he looked, his blond head tousled—
There under the army blanket where death wrote *finis* to the dreams
he had.
There were others, too, in whose pockets were trinkets,
Lucky charms, photographs, letters from mothers or wives or sweet-
hearts,
All hoping their men would return and the war soon be over.
Here was one in the wallet of a young German gunner.
It was from his mother:
"I suppose it will end some day and you will come home. . . ."
The gunner lay under the drifting sands.
A wooden cross hallowed his grave.
A British truck had just rolled up.
The radio, tuned to a London station, was playing strains of "*Humoresque*."
The melody quivered through the evening air and then floated away
on the cool desert breeze—
A strange requiem for the German gunner
And for his comrade under the army blanket.

In the Bougainville jungles the foe lay unburied.
On barbed wire entanglements after one day's battle

Hung a mat of five hundred dead Japanese.
The beaches of Betio were fringed with the dead—
Riddled corpses of Yankee Marines and the charred remains of
Japanese defenders.
How still they lay—
Face downward,
Face upward,
Arms flung out carelessly as if in sleep—
There on the beaches, lying so still—
There on the snow—
Like children fallen asleep by the wayside.

The night descended.
Over torn mountains and desert and shoreland it stole like a mother
to sleeping children.
The crisp stars and the silence cast a spell over battlefields
And the dead who slept there—
Those thousands and thousands on whom the moonlight glimmered
Unmindful of the human carnage.

The Pacific Ocean was a kind of chessboard
With enlisted men merged in a symbol called manpower and islands
as airdromes, footholds, bases.
The generals and four wise men were the players.
In the shadow of the Sphinx they had met and conferred.
They had plotted the dismemberment of the Japanese Empire,
The return of the provinces stolen from China—
All but Hong Kong.
Hong Kong—ah, that was another matter.

They hallowed their accord with a Thanksgiving feasting.
“A perfect symphony,” our newspapers told us,
“From shrimp cocktails to pumpkin pie.”
A “thoroughly democratic blowout”; and went on to tell:
That President Roosevelt sang a song;
That Winston Churchill did a “tidy dance” to the tune of “*Side-
walks of New York*”;
That everyone called for his favorite tune;
That all unbent and had the heartiest fun!

Yet only the day before in far-off Tarawa

American victors were burying their dead,
Hundreds brought in from all parts of the island,
Brought in on litters, ponchos, and improvised stretchers—
Twenty-five . . . thirty . . . to be buried in one grave.
Riddled
Blasted
Unrecognizable
Dirty
Unshaven
Blood-matted Marines piled into one grave.

* * *

Beneath the crosses row on row
The dreams of millions of men were buried.
Widows received from colonels and generals the Purple Heart their
 husbands had won.
Their infant sons in mute awe wore them.
Mothers had Silver Stars pinned to their lapels,
Reminders of sons they would see no more.
They made long trips to attend the ceremony—
Like the trip that Private Smith's mother made to Fort Knox.

The flag on the tall pole flapped in the breeze.
The band was playing.
The guard of military police with white gloves stood at attention
As Private Smith's mother walked to the circle.
Her arm rested unsteadily upon the General's firm one.
Now the band struck up stirringly "The Star-Spangled Banner."
Then the Colonel read in moving tones "General Order Number
 Thirty-one. . . .
Richard Smith, Private First Class . . . for gallantry in action. . . ."

A General stepped forward to address Richard's mother:
"It is with deep sympathy and yet with pride that I give you, the
 mother of an American hero,
This medal.
With it go the thanks of this great nation."

Then Private Smith's mother was on her way home,
For she must get back to her other children.
She fingered the medal pinned to her black coat and murmured
 wistfully,

"I could have visited him . . . if I had tried right hard.
He thought so much of me . . .
Took a hand in the home more than the other children.
Always begging me to go to meeting.
And when he sat up late at night—he was the scholar—
He would move back the chairs before going to bed
So that I wouldn't stumble over them in the morning."

* * *

The moonlight strayed over the world's battlefields,
Searching for lost joys that would come no more,
Searching old gardens for lost dreams and their dreamers.
It strayed through the windows of homes,
Over the table where Private Smith studied far into the night—
Over the chairs that he moved out of the way lest his mother stumble
upon them in the dim hours of morning—
Searching for the ghosts of the world's youth who died to make
others free.

There are not enough ships in the world to be named for the sailor
heroes,
Nor parade grounds or airfields enough to name for the soldier
brave.
They were heroes all, who died on the battlefield—
The nameless ones of whom the General said:
"They never gave an inch. They died right in their foxholes."

At Fort Knox, Kentucky, in a drizzling rain
Six generals and two score other officers paid tribute to a brother-
in-arms.
Before the tall flagpole with colors at half mast
A platoon of infantry was drawn up while the adjutant read:
"General Order Number Forty-three . . ."

The impersonal words echoed over the gray parade ground,
And then the Commanding General spoke:
"On December eighth, the first day that America entered the war,
Private Robert H. Brooks died on the battlefield . . .
For him, the first soldier of the Armored Force to be killed in action,
This parade ground with its flag at half mast will be named Brooks
Field. . . ."

The mist of rain made a ghostly setting—
Soldiers, officers—all like a dream.
But the General continued:
“Reveille has sounded for all living Americans.
In the factories
On the farms
In the mines
In the offices—
All are answering the call.
Yet none can make a greater sacrifice for the nation
Than the soldier who gives his life.”

Then the chaplain prayed:
“O Almighty and Eternal God, be pleased to bless this gathering
Grant that the dedication of this field may include the dedication
of our lives
To the defense of the principles, ideals, and institutions
For which he so generously gave his life. . . .”
Three volleys of rifle fire shattered the silence,
Then the thin, sad notes of “Taps,”
And the flag climbed back to the top of the flagpole.

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